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An exploration of race, body image, and competitiveness.

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AN EXPLORATION OF RACE, BODY IMAGE, AND COMPETITIVENESS

A Thesis Presented

by

TONYA D. LOCKARD

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

September 2002

Department of Psychology

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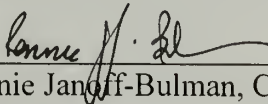
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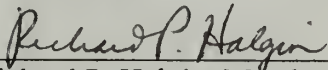
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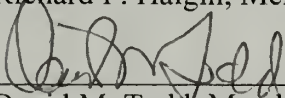
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DEDICATION

To my loving mother and father.
All that I am, I owe to the both of you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to begin by thanking the chair of my committee, Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, for the gentle encouragement, helpful guidance, and tireless enthusiasm that helped make this project possible. I would also like to extend my sincerest thanks to the members of my committee, Richard Halgin and David Todd, whose unending support, cooperation and patience were invaluable.

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ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATION OF RACE, BODY IMAGE, AND COMPETITIVENESS

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The primary purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between competitiveness and body image among African American and White college students. This study also explored the relationship between the desire for power and achievement and body dissatisfaction. The relationship between African American racial identity and body satisfaction was examined as well. Participants were 42 African American and 41 White female college students. Subjects completed scales that included measures of competitiveness, body satisfaction, social values (i.e., power, achievement, and benevolence), and racial identity. Overall, White women reported greater body dissatisfaction than African American women. White women also reported higher levels of competitive attitudes. Hypercompetitive attitudes were predictive of body dissatisfaction for both African American and White women. The desire for power was related to body dissatisfaction for African American women, whereas the desire for achievement was related to body dissatisfaction for White women. Racial identity was not related to body satisfaction for African American women in the present sample.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Due to efforts to attain what is often an unattainable image, many women are dissatisfied with their appearance (Smith, Burlew & Lundgren, 1991). Specifically, dissatisfaction with weight and body image has been widely reported among adolescent White females (Parker, Nichter, Nichter, Vuckovic, Sims & Ritenbaugh, 1995). By contrast, the limited literature on African American adolescent females suggests that they tend to be less dissatisfied with their bodies (Parker et al., 1995; Cachelin, Veisel, Barzeganzari, & Striegel-Moore, 2000). Many studies also report that there are major racial differences in the rates of disordered eating, with eating disorders being most prevalent among White females and less prevalent among African American females (Cachelin et al., 2000). However, other studies suggest that this gap in disordered eating practices between African American and White females is narrowing (Cachelin et al., 2000).

What accounts for some of these purported differences between African American and White female adolescents in body satisfaction? While the differences in body satisfaction between these two groups has been widely cited, the reasons for these cultural differences have not been fully explored (Parker et al., 1995). Parker et al. (1995) argue that these differences in body satisfaction between African American and White adolescent females are due to a fundamental difference in the way that these two populations perceive themselves and their bodies. Specifically, in their study of White and African American adolescent females, Parker et al. (1995) found that many White females tended to view thinness and physical perfection as their ultimate path to a

successful, happy life. Parker et al. (1995) also found that this drive towards thinness and perfection served to foster an attitude of competition among the White adolescent females as well as increased dissatisfaction with their own bodies. In talking with the White adolescent females, researchers found that they all typically had an idea of what the “perfect girl” looked like, and their descriptions of this model of perfection tended to emphasize physical traits (Parker et al., 1995). By contrast, when the African American females were asked about their ideas of the ideal girl, their emphasis centered primarily on each individual person highlighting her good features and showcasing her unique personality. The descriptions of the African American adolescents tended to focus more on specific personality traits that they thought were attractive (Parker et al., 1995).

Where does this emphasis on physical perfection that exists among certain young women come from? Botta (1999) argues that media images contribute to rampant body image disturbance and dissatisfaction because of their emphasis on an unrealistically thin body ideal. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to being affected by the mass media’s portrayals of female attractiveness, as they are at a point in their young lives when they are looking to outside sources in an effort to form their identity (Botta, 1999). Many adolescent females are looking towards people they see in magazines and on television to provide a model of how their bodies should look (Botta, 1999).

Some body image literature suggests that body dissatisfaction among young women is not only related to the prevailing sociocultural standards of thinness and media portrayals, but also female concerns with success and failure (Silverstein & Purdue, 1988). Silverstein & Purdue (1988) suggest that women who are highly achievement oriented may be motivated to pursue the ideal of thinness because they believe possessing

a rounder, feminine looking body might undermine their perceived level of competence and intelligence. Silverstein & Purdue (1988) also suggest that achievement concerns appear to be related to how thin a woman wants to be.

The findings of Silverstein & Purdue (1988) leads to an interesting question: Is there a relationship between the desire to attain status and prestige in career goals and body dissatisfaction among young women? A preliminary investigation of young college women's career aspirations and body image (Janoff-Bulman & Greenwood, 1999) found body dissatisfaction was associated with a desire to achieve wealth, status and power. Janoff-Bulman & Greenwood (1999) found that White college women who had a strong desire to achieve wealth, status, and power tended to also rate high on measures of body shame and body monitoring.

Striegel-Moore, Silberstein, Grunberg, & Rodin (1990) suggest that the link between young women's achievement concerns and disordered eating could be further illuminated if the components of achievement orientation are studied. According to Striegel-Moore et al. (1990), achievement orientation consists of the dimensions: perfectionism, attitudes towards work, desire for challenging tasks, fear of success, and competitiveness. Prior research on achievement orientation and body image has focused primarily on perfectionism. Thus, research needs to be conducted exploring how the other components of achievement orientation relate to body image among young women.

Statement of the Problem

The present study was an attempt to explore the relationship between competitiveness and body dissatisfaction among African American and White women. Another goal of the study was to explore the relationship between personal values, such

as the desire for power and achievement, and body dissatisfaction. For example, does the relationship between the desire for power and body shame found by Janoff-Bulman & Greenwood (1999) also hold true for African American female college students? While the body image literature suggests that societal messages play an important role in the body satisfaction of most young women (Parker et al, 1995; Botta, 1999), the body image of young African American women is apt to be further complicated and mediated by issues of acculturation. Specifically, body satisfaction among African American women may be affected by the extent to which they have adopted and identify with Western society's standards of attractiveness and beauty. Smith, Burlew & Lundgren (1991) found a moderate correlation between African American women's degree of Black Consciousness and their satisfaction with their overall physical appearance. The question of whether there is a link between achievement orientation and body satisfaction among African American college women is further complicated by the fact that African American women have three choices when choosing a reference group in defining their attractiveness: the larger dominant society, the African American community or a combination of both (Smith, Burlew & Lundgren, 1991). Given these factors, the study also examined the relationship between racial identity and body image among African American women.

Studying the factors that influence body image is important because poor body image has not only been linked to the development of eating disorders, but also of low self-esteem, vulnerability to depression, and anxiety (Henriques, Calhoun, & Cann, 1996). Thus, better understanding the factors that are related to poor body image may

help to inform interventions that can alter that image before it leads to more negative mental health consequences for young women.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

Subjects were 83 undergraduate women who attend the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Data were collected on 93 women, but 10 subjects were excluded from the final sample because they identified as having a race/ethnicity other than African American or White. The sample consisted of 42 African American females and 41 White females. All of the White subjects participated in the study in exchange for experimental credits in their psychology class. The African American participants were recruited in a variety of ways. Flyers were posted in strategic locations throughout the University of Massachusetts- Amherst (UMass) campus briefly describing the study and soliciting the participation of African American females in exchange for scratch lottery tickets. African American participants were also further solicited through a message posted to one of the UMass/Five College newsgroups that are accessible through the Internet. The researcher also visited several UMass campus dormitories and personally invited African American females to participate in the study. Additional African American subjects were recruited from an abnormal psychology class, a research methods class and two minority leadership classes. The final sample consisted of 26 (31.3%) freshmen, 17 (20.5%) sophomores, 29 (34.9%) juniors and 11 (13.3%) seniors.

Measures and Procedure

All participants completed a questionnaire that included demographic information, a measure of competitive attitudes, a measure of body satisfaction, a scale of

social values, a measure of African American identity, and a scale that measured the extent to which the participant objectified her body (See Appendix). The measures of interest are described below.

Job Status Questionnaire. Participants were asked to complete a job status questionnaire designed by Janoff-Bulman & Greenwood (1999). The questionnaire, which is based on Rosenberg's (1957) Occupations and Values, is designed to assess what values are most important to the participant in deciding on a future career or job (This questionnaire was not used in the analyses and will not be further discussed because 16 subjects failed to follow the directions for ranking the job values).

Personal Development Competitive Attitude Scale. Subjects completed 6 items from the Personal Development Competitive Attitude Scale (PDCA; Ryckman, Hammer, Kaczor & Gold, 1996). This measure was designed to measure the extent to which the participant subscribes to what the researchers call a *personal development competition orientation* (Ryckman et al., 1996). Ryckman et al. (1996) define *personal development competitiveness* as an attitude in which the primary focus is on enjoyment, self-improvement, task-mastery and self-discovery rather than the denigration of others to enhance the self or winning at all costs. In this study personal development competitiveness is referred to simply as "good competition." The subset of items completed by the participants was selected based on face validity. The PDCA Scale consists of 15 items that represent a competitive attitude or a non-competitive attitude. Each of the items had the following response alternatives: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*slightly agree*), 3 (*neither disagree or agree*), 4 (*slightly agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items are "I enjoy competition because it gives me a chance to discover my

abilities” and “I do not find competition to be a very valuable means of learning about myself and others” (reverse-scored). All items were scored in the direction of a competitive attitude, with higher scores indicating stronger competitive attitudes. The participants’ response to each item on the scale was summed to form a total PDCA score. The authors (Ryckman et al., 1996) report an alpha of .91 for the scale. The internal consistency for the 6 items used from the PDCA Scale in this study was .90.

Hypercompetitive Attitude Scale. Participants completed a subset of the Hypercompetitive Attitudes Scale (HCA; Ryckman, Hammer, Kaczor & Gold, 1990). The items selected for administration were chosen based on face validity. Designed to measure participants’ attitude toward competition, the HCA scale consists of 26 statements that demonstrate either a hyper-competitive or non-competitive philosophy. Respondents rated each item on a 5-point scale comprising the following response options: 1 (*never true of me*), 2 (*seldom true of me*), 3 (*sometimes true of me*), 4 (*often true of me*), and 5 (*always true of me*). Sample items are “Winning in competition makes me feel more powerful as a person” and “Winning in competition does not give me a greater sense of worth.” The subjects’ response to each individual item was summed to form a total HCA score. All items were scored in the direction of a hypercompetitive attitude, with higher scores indicating stronger hypercompetitive attitudes. The reported internal consistency (α) for the scale was .91, suggesting that the scale has strong internal consistency. The internal consistency for the 6 items chosen from the HCA scale was .76.

Values Scale. Subjects also completed a Values Scale, which was designed to assess how important the values of power, achievement, and benevolence are to the

respondent. The Values Scale was modeled after Schwartz's (1994) Values Survey. According to Schwartz (1994), human values may be classified into motivational types, such as power, achievement or benevolence. These motivational values consist of subordinate values that typify them. Consistent with Schwartz's (1994) theory, the value power consists of social power, wealth, social recognition, authority and preserving public image; the value achievement consists of success, intelligence, influence, ambition, self-respect, and competence; and benevolence consists of helpfulness, honesty, loyalty, responsibility, mature love, true friendship and forgiveness. The Values Scale presented a list of the 18 values that Schwartz (1994) used to represent the motivational values power, achievement, and benevolence. Respondents were asked to rate each value on an 8-point scale indicating how important that particular value is in her life. The response set ranged from 1 (This value is of no importance to me) to 8 (This value is of supreme importance to me). Each subject received a separate score for power, achievement and benevolence by adding her responses to the values that comprised those respective motivating values. The higher the power, achievement or benevolence score, the more important that value is to the respondent. The internal consistencies (α) for the Power, Achievement, and Benevolence scores, respectively, were as follows: .79, .81, and .89.

Contour Drawing Rating Scale. Respondents also completed the Contour Drawing Rating Scale (CDRS; Thompson & Gray, 1995). The CDRS is a body image assessment tool that consists of nine contour drawings of graduated sizes. Participants were asked to identify which of the contour drawings best represents their current body size. They were also asked to indicate which drawing best represents their ideal body size. The contour

drawings were labeled 1 through 9, with 1 representing the thinnest figure shown and 9 representing the largest figure shown. The discrepancy between the subjects' self-reported actual and ideal figures was taken to represent the participants' level of body dissatisfaction. The reliability of the CDRS was .78.

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity. Participants also completed the Centrality Scale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997). The MIBI is a measure of African American racial identity that contains seven subscales representing what the researchers believe are the stable dimensions of African American racial identity (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997). The Centrality Subscale, which attends to how important race is as a central part of one's self-concept, was used in the present study. The Centrality Subscale of the MIBI consists of 8 items to which participants responded using a 7-point Likert-type scale with endpoints strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (7). All items were scored in the direction of a strong racial identity, with negatively worded items being reversed scored. A full-scale Centrality score was then obtained by summing the responses to each of the individual items. The higher the Centrality score, the stronger the respondent's identification with an African American self-concept. As reported by the authors (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997), the internal consistency of the Centrality subscale of the MIBI is .77.

Objectified Body Consciousness Scale. The Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS; McKinley & Hyde, 1996) measures the extent to which the participant experiences her body as an object. OBCS authors theorize that the tendency to view one's body as an object can lead to negative body experiences among women (McKinley &

Hyde, 1996). The OBCS consists of three subscales: Body Surveillance, Body Shame, and Control Beliefs. The three subscales are named for the three components of the objectified body consciousness as conceptualized by McKinley & Hyde (1996). Each of the subscales consists of eight items. Participants endorsed items on a 6-point scale, ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (6). Consistent with the authors scoring, each of the items was scored in the direction of the participant having low levels of the dimension being studied by the subscale. Each participant received a subscale score that was obtained by adding her responses to each item on that subscale. The authors (McKinley & Hyde, 1996) report the following internal consistencies (α) for the OBC Scales: Body Surveillance scale, .79; Body Shame Scale, .84; and Control Beliefs Scale, .68.

Weight and Appearance Feedback Questionnaire. To assess weight and appearance feedback, the researcher created a simple eight-item questionnaire asking subjects to rate the feedback that they receive about their weight and appearance. For weight feedback, each participant was asked to rate the type of feedback she receives from her mother, father, friends and romantic partners on a 7-point scale, with 1 = *I am too thin* and 7 = *I am too heavy*. Appearance feedback was similarly assessed on a 7-point scale, with 1 = *extremely negative feedback* and (7) = *extremely positive feedback*.

Demographic Information. All participants were asked to report their current weight, ideal weight and height. Additionally, subjects were asked to report their class year, academic major and race/ethnicity. Any participant who checked more than one box for her racial classification was excluded from analyses.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

African American women in this sample were, on average, almost 20 pounds heavier than White women ($\underline{M} = 153$ vs. $\underline{M} = 134$), $t(81) = 2.94$, $p < .05$.

Correspondingly, African American women's self-reported ideal weight was also significantly heavier than that of White women ($\underline{M} = 139$ vs. $\underline{M} = 122$), $t(81) = 3.90$, $p < .001$. African American women's mean height was 65.21 inches, while that of White women was 65.02 inches. There was no statistical difference between the self-reported heights of the two groups.

While there were no demonstrated group differences in the desire for status, power, or achievement, White women scored higher on the measures of hypercompetitiveness and good competition (See Table 1). White women also reported higher levels of body surveillance and marginally higher levels of body shame [Due to the scoring methods employed, high scores on the Body Shame and Body Surveillance scales would indicate low levels of body shame and body surveillance, respectively. Thus, White women actually scored lower on these measures, indicating greater body shame and greater body surveillance] (See Table 1). African American women's self-reported ideal figure was significantly larger than that of White women's (See Table 1). Additionally, analyses revealed that the White women in the sample received significantly more positive weight feedback than the African American women (See Table 1).

Further, correlational analyses revealed that hypercompetitiveness was associated with body dissatisfaction for both African American and White subjects (See Table 2).

for both groups of subjects. Specifically, hypercompetitiveness related to body shame for African American women ($r = -.32, p < .05$), but not for White women ($r = -.23, ns$). Conversely, hypercompetitiveness was significantly related to body surveillance for White females ($r = -.40, p < .01$), but not for African American women ($r = -.12, ns$) [Recall that high scores on the Body Shame and Body Surveillance scales indicate *lower* levels of shame and surveillance and low scores on these measures indicate *higher* levels of body shame and surveillance]. While there was no significant relationship between achievement orientation and any of the body satisfaction measures for the African American subjects in the sample, there was a significant relationship between achievement orientation and body surveillance for White participants ($r = -.364, p < .05$). The desire for power was associated with body shame and body surveillance for African American women, but not for White women (See Table 2). Concerning the relationship between feedback and body dissatisfaction, African American women who received positive appearance feedback tended to experience more body shame. White women who received weight feedback stating that they were too heavy tended to experience more body shame.

It was also theorized that there would be a positive relationship between measured racial identity and body satisfaction for African American women. This relationship, however, was not supported in this sample. There was no significant relationship between the African American subjects' racial identity and measured Body Surveillance, Body Shame or Ideal Difference ($r = .04, -.01$ and $.09$, respectively). Correlations among the various measures of body dissatisfaction (Body Surveillance, Body Shame, Ideal Difference and Weight Difference) for African American and White women,

respectively, are reported in Tables 3 and 4.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

There were no observed differences in the desire for power, status or achievement between the two groups, yet White women tended to be more competitive, both in terms of “good competition” and hypercompetitiveness, and more dissatisfied with their bodies than African American women. The observed differences in body satisfaction between the two groups supported findings reported in previous studies (Harris, 1994; Parker et al., 1995; Molloy & Herzberger, 1998). The African American women in the present sample also reported wanting to achieve a significantly larger ideal figure than that of White women, which is a finding that corresponds with Molloy & Herzberger’s (1998) findings that African American females tend to be less concerned with being thin and that their attempts to lose weight tend to be more realistic and less extreme than White women’s attempts.

The proposed relationship between competitiveness and body dissatisfaction was supported by this sample of young women, as hypercompetitiveness was found to be related to body surveillance in young White women and body shame in African American women. Stated plainly, those White women who scored high on the Hypercompetitive Attitudes Scale (HCA; Ryckman, Hammer, Kaczor & Gold, 1990) also tended to engage in more frequent body surveillance; alternatively, those African American women who scored high on the HCA tended to experience greater body shame. How can we explain this observed link between competitive attitudes and body dissatisfaction? As suggested by Striegel-Moore et al. (1990), it is possible that women who display an above average need to compete and achieve could feel the need to

compete in all areas of their lives, including their physical appearances. This explanation also speaks to the very definition of hypercompetitiveness given by Ryckman, et al. (1990). Ryckman et al. (1990) describe hypercompetitiveness as an “indiscriminant need by individuals to compete and win (and to avoid losing) at any cost as a means of maintaining or enhancing feelings of self-worth, with an attendant orientation of manipulation, aggressiveness, exploitation, and denigration of others across a myriad of situations.” (p.630)

However, how do we account for the observed racial differences regarding how competitiveness relates to body dissatisfaction? Specifically, why would competitiveness be related to Body Surveillance for White women and Body Shame for African American women? For a possible explanation of this observed phenomenon, it may be important to examine the meanings of the components of the Objectified Body Consciousness, specifically, body surveillance and body shame. According to McKinley & Hyde (1996) and other researchers (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), the Objectified Body Consciousness is a state of mind whereby women have internalized the prevailing cultural body standards and come to think of their bodies as objects to be admired or looked upon. This state of mind is theorized to result from the larger objectification that women face through media images that focus primarily on their bodies and appearance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

According to Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) and McKinley & Hyde (1996), the adoption of this state of mind can have negative mental consequences for women. That is where the constructs of body surveillance and body shame come into play. McKinley & Hyde (1996) describe body surveillance as the habitual monitoring of one's body and

being worried about how others view one's appearance. As one can imagine, such constant monitoring can lead a woman to become anxious and so wrapped up in her physical appearance that other aspects of her person are de-emphasized. Body shame (McKinley & Hyde, 1996) can be thought of as a feeling of shame about one's body that results when one fails to live up to some standard of how one's body should look. This body standard is usually an internalization of the prevailing cultural standard.

These definitions of body surveillance and body shame may partially clarify why hypercompetitiveness was related to body surveillance for White women and body shame for African American women. Inherent in the definition of body surveillance is a belief by the individual that she is able to live up to the externally imposed standard of attractiveness if she is continually engaged in monitoring how she looks. By extension, the hypercompetitive White women in the sample appeared to believe that they can achieve the cultural appearance standard. By contrast, body shame as defined by McKinley & Hyde (1996) is shame that results from not meeting the culture's body standard. Given that definition, it would appear that the hypercompetitive African American women in the sample had a desire to compete in all aspects of their lives just like the hypercompetitive White women in the sample. However, the African American women may have a deep awareness that they can never meet the dominant culture's beauty standard given that a large component of that standard involves having European features.

Regarding achievement orientation, the results of this examination were similar to those found by Striegel-Moore et al. (1990), as it appears women for whom achievement was most important also tended to engage in more body surveillance. However, this

relationship was only observed for White females in the present study. For a possible explanation of why this may be so, it is useful to turn to research done by Silverstein & Perlick (1995). In their book, *The Cost of Competence*, Silverstein and Perlick (1995) cite studies that propose that women who are highly concerned with achievement and what others may think about their achievements tend to be more dissatisfied and more uncomfortable with their bodies. The authors (Silverstein & Perlick, 1995) also cite studies in which people tend to associate female competence and intelligence with being thinner and less curvaceous. Given this assumed connection between appearance and competence, the authors (Silverstein & Perlick, 1995) assert that it is highly possible that high achieving women may be more likely to associate curvaceous, large feminine bodies with lack of achievement. I would like to extend Silverstein & Perlick's (1995) assertion even further and propose that these high achieving women may not only be associating a larger, curvy figure with being less intelligent, but also with a "lack of achievement" in the physical appearance domain. Therefore, these high achieving young women may be similar to the women who scored high on the hypercompetitiveness measure in that they wish to succeed on all fronts.

With all that being said, it still leaves an unanswered question: Why is it that achievement oriented White women appear to be highly concerned with their appearance and more uncomfortable with their bodies and the same is not true of African American women? In order to offer a possible answer to the question, it is important to restate that there were no observed group differences in the desire to achieve between African American and White women (See Table 1). The answer may lie in part, in the importance of images. As Botta (1999) stated, the media helps contribute to the widespread body

dissatisfaction that has been found in various studies (Smith, Burlew, & Lundgren, 1991; Parker et al., 1995; Cachelin et al., 2000) by propagating certain standards for attractiveness. Botta's (1999) uses social comparison theory to explain the potential impact that media images may have on adolescent girls. Specifically, Botta (1999) posits that with regards to body image, people will compare themselves to people and images that they perceive to represent realistic goals for them to attain. After the comparison, people are presumably more motivated to achieve those goals. Botta (1999) states that this comparison process is automatic. Thus, the comparison is made without the individual even being aware of it. Assuming the body image social comparison process is plausible, it stands to reason that the achievement oriented women are comparing themselves to women who represent achievement in some type of intellectual or professional domain, as this seems to be vitally important to these young women.

I propose that the comparison images from the intellectual/professional domain differ for African American women and White women. If these young women are choosing comparison images that represent realistic goals for them, as Botta (1999) states, then these images are more likely to be similar to them on certain dimensions, namely gender and race. With only a cursory glance at some of the prominent female figures in professional domains, one can make the case that a wider range of body sizes are represented among high achieving African American women than among White women. When one is asked to name powerful female public figures (i.e. figures that are known to a majority of Americans through television and/or news exposure) that happen to have a larger body size, I think most people are hard pressed to name many White women of such stature. However, it is easier to come up with the names of African

American women who are high achievers and don't live up to the thin standard of beauty. Oprah Winfrey, Maya Angelou, Whoopi Goldberg, and Star Jones are some examples that come to mind most immediately. While most of this evidence is anecdotal, it does speak to a difference in the range of images that are depicted in the African American and White communities. I also think that achievement oriented African American women may tend to monitor their bodies less than their White counterparts because they may be more concerned with how their race is being perceived in achievement/competitive situations rather than their gender. This is an area that needs to be explored through further research.

The finding that the desire for power was associated with greater body shame and greater body surveillance for African American women yet not for White women was unexpected. Silverstein & Perlick (1995) suggest that women who aspire to achieve in traditionally male domains may feel greater pressure to reaffirm their femininity through attempts to adhere to prevailing notions of female attractiveness. Thus, it is possible that the African American women in the present sample who endorsed power as an important value felt compelled to live up to cultural body standards in order to prove that they are still attractive and feminine. While it is unclear why a similar relationship was not revealed for White women, it may be possible that there is a fundamental difference in the way African American and White women experience power. As expected, White women who received social feedback that they were too heavy reported more body shame. This result supports similar findings by Henriques, Calhoun & Cann, (1996). However, it was surprising to find that positive appearance feedback was related to greater body shame in African American women. An examination of the *content* of the

appearance feedback that these women received could provide explanations for why this result occurred. It could be possible that African American and White women experience social feedback in different ways. This question needs further exploration.

Surprisingly, the results of the present study did not support earlier findings (Smith, Burlew, & Lundgren, 1991) that the racial identity of African American females was related to their body image. What makes these results so surprising is that various researchers (Abrams, Allen & Gray, 1993; Henriques, Calhoun & Cann, 1996; Smith, Burlew, & Lundgren, 1991) have reported that when African American women adopt more of the values of the predominant White culture, they report greater pressure to diet and they exhibit more problematic eating behaviors.

Limitations of the Present Study

This study had a number of limitations. As this was a very small sample of a New England college population, of course these results cannot be generalized. A much larger representative sample would be needed to test for similarities and differences across racial/ethnic groups. Another limitation of this study lies in the difficulty in finding African American subjects to participate in the study on a campus with a relative lack of minority presence. This problem led a non-standardized testing environment, as the researcher had to resort to handing out the questionnaires in any place where she could find African American females willing to participate. In addition, this researcher believes a deeper understanding of the relationship between racial identity and body image may have resulted had another measure of racial identity, such as the Black Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RIAS-B; Parham & Helms, 1981) been administered. Upon closer examination, the Centrality Subscale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity

(MIBI; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997) appears to tap psychological feelings of closeness with other African Americans rather than distinguishing the culture that the African American person may identify with most closely.

Implications of the Present Study

The current study emphasizes the importance of considering personality factors when exploring the differences in body satisfaction between African American and White women. The most widely researched component of achievement orientation, to date, has been perfectionism; thus, the finding that hypercompetitiveness is related to body dissatisfaction in both African American and White women adds to the research literature that explores the relationship between the components of achievement orientation and body image.

Taken together, the finding that the desire for power is related to body dissatisfaction for African American women and the result that the desire for achievement is associated with body dissatisfaction in White women suggest that the dynamics underlying body image may be different for African American and White women. Additionally, the finding that positive appearance feedback is related to greater body shame among some African American women suggests that African American and White women may experience appearance feedback differently.

Directions for Future Research

Future studies should take into account the aforementioned limitations of this present study. A larger sample that includes women from the community should be obtained so that statements about the generalizability of these findings are possible. Given the surprising result that positive appearance feedback is related to body shame for African

American women, it may be important to examine the content of the feedback that both African American and White women receive regarding their appearance and weight in a future study. Additionally, a future study exploring female susceptibility to the influence of media images may further explain why White women report greater body dissatisfaction than African American women.

Table 1. Comparisons of African American and White Subjects on Study Variables

Variables	African American Women (n = 42)		White Women (n = 41)		T-Value
	M	SD	M	SD	
Status Orientation	10.67	5.04	12.09	4.65	1.34
Good Competition	19.36	6.18	22.56	4.35	-2.73**
Hypercompetitiveness	14.98	3.74	16.73	4.23	-2.01*
Power Orientation	27.12	6.29	26.73	6.75	.27
Achievement Orientation	42.21	6.85	41.56	3.71	.54
^a Body Surveillance	27.11	7.27	21.88	7.89	3.15**
^a Body Shame	35.71	7.43	32.16	9.42	1.89 ⁺
^a Body Control	23.24	5.96	24.37	5.84	-.87
Total Weight Feedback	15.38	3.22	13.32	3.99	2.60*
Total Appearance Feedback	21.73	4.11	23.05	3.49	-1.54
Racial Identity Score	37.33	8.46	25.07	10.64	5.82
Ideal Difference ¹	.76	1.78	1.12	1.66	-.95
Weight Difference ²	3.69	20.99	11.19	13.94	.64
Ideal Figure	4.52	1.19	3.51	1.27	3.74***
Real Figure	5.29	2.09	4.63	1.96	1.47

¹The Ideal Difference is the difference between the subjects' Ideal Figure and Real Figure as measured by the Contour Drawing Rating Scale.

²The Weight Difference is the difference between the subjects' self reported weight and her ideal weight.

^a Higher scores on this dependent variable indicates lower levels of the variable

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001 ⁺ p = .06, marginally significant

Table 2. Correlations between Body Shame, Body Satisfaction and other Study Variables

<u>African American Women (N=42)</u>	<u>Body Shame</u>	<u>Body Surveillance</u>
Good Competition	-.29 ⁺ (.06)	-.29 ⁺ (.06)
Hypercompetitiveness	-.32* (.05)	-.12 (n.s.)
Power	-.28 ⁺ (.07)	-.28 ⁺ (.07)
Achieve	-.03 (n.s.)	-.09 (n.s.)
Benevolence	-.12 (n.s.)	-.08 (n.s.)
Relative Appearance Feedback	-.31* (.05)	.22 (n.s.)
Relative Weight Feedback	-.03 (n.s.)	-.06 (n.s.)

<u>White Women (N=41)</u>	<u>Body Shame</u>	<u>Body Surveillance</u>
Good Competition	.05 (n.s.)	-.10 (n.s.)
Hypercompetitiveness	-.23 (n.s.)	-.40** (.009)
Power	-.14 (n.s.)	-.25 (n.s.)
Achieve	-.11 (n.s.)	-.36* (.02)
Benevolence	-.20 (n.s.)	-.04 (n.s.)
Relative Appearance Feedback	-.03 (.05)	.07 (n.s.)
Relative Weight Feedback	-.44** (.004)	-.10 (n.s.)

+p < .10 * p < .05 **p < .01

Table 3. Intercorrelations of Body Dissatisfaction Measures for African American Subjects (N=42)

	Body Shame	Body Surveillance	Ideal Difference	Weight Difference
Body Shame	—	.48 (.001)	-.32 (.05)	-.45 (.005)
Body Surveillance		—	-.28 (.07)	-.16 (n.s.)
Ideal Difference			—	.64 (.001)
Weight Difference				—

Table 4. Intercorrelations of Body Dissatisfaction Measures for White Subjects (N=41)

	Body Shame	Body Surveillance	Ideal Difference	Weight Difference
Body Shame	—	.56 (.001)	-.48 (.001)	-.40 (.01)
Body Surveillance		—	-.23 (n.s.)	-.28 (.07)
Ideal Difference			—	.53 (.001)
Weight Difference				—

APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

We are interested in women's career goals, values, and aspirations. Please be as honest as you can in completing the questions that follow. Thank you for your participation.

Please consider the extent to which the following factors are important to you in your future job. Rank the items in order of importance to you by placing a "1" on the line beside the most important value, a "2" beside the next most important value, and continuing on to "10" for the value you consider least important. Please use ALL 10 numbers, using each one only ONCE!

Rank items from 1 to 10 (1= most important and 10= least important)

It is important to me that my future job:

- ___ Provides me an opportunity to use my special abilities or aptitudes
- ___ Provides me with a chance to earn a good deal of money
- ___ Permits me to be creative and original
- ___ Gives me social status and prestige
- ___ Gives me an opportunity to work with people rather than things
- ___ Enables me to look forward to a stable, secure future
- ___ Leaves me relatively free of supervision by others
- ___ Gives me a chance to exercise leadership
- ___ Provides me with adventure
- ___ Gives me an opportunity to be helpful to others

We are interested in your future career plans. What are your job or career goals? In other words, in terms of job or career, what do you want to be? (Please be as specific as possible)

Please use the following scale in responding to the statements below. On the line preceding each item, please write the number that best corresponds to how much you agree or disagree with statement.

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = slightly disagree
- 3 = neither disagree or agree
- 4 = slightly agree
- 5 = strongly agree

- ___ 1) I enjoy competition because it gives me a chance to discover my abilities.
- ___ 2) I value competition because it helps me to be the best that I can be.
- ___ 3) I do not find competition to be a very valuable means of learning about myself and others.
- ___ 4) I like competition because it teaches me a lot about myself.
- ___ 5) Competition does not help me develop my abilities more.
- ___ 6) I enjoy competition because it helps bring me to a higher level of motivation to bring out the best in myself rather than as a means of doing better than others.

Please use the following scale in responding to the statements below. On the line preceding each item, please write the number that best corresponds to how much you agree or disagree with statement.

- 1 = Never true of me
- 2 = Seldom true of me
- 3 = Sometimes true of me
- 4 = Often true of me
- 5 = Always true of me

- ___ 1) Winning in competition makes me feel more powerful as a person.
- ___ 2) I find myself being competitive in situations which do not call for competition.
- ___ 3) I compete with others even if they are not competing with me.
- ___ 4) Winning in competition does not give me a greater sense of worth.
- ___ 5) When my competitors receive awards for their accomplishments, I feel envy.
- ___ 6) I find myself turning a friendly game or activity into a serious contest or conflict.

Using the scale below, please rate the importance of each of the following as a guiding principle in your life. Place the number that best corresponds with your response on the line preceding each item.

This value is of
no importance
to me

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

This value is of
supreme
importance to me
8

___ social power

___ success

___ influence

___ helpfulness

___ honesty

___ wealth

___ loyalty

___ intelligence

___ ambition

___ responsibility

___ mature love

___ authority (the right to command or lead)

___ true friendship

___ self-respect

___ social recognition

___ preserving my public image

___ forgiveness

___ competence

Please use the following scale in responding to the statements below. On the line preceding each item, please write the number that best corresponds to how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

- 1 = strongly agree
- 2 = agree on the whole
- 3 = agree a little
- 4 = disagree a little
- 5 = disagree on the whole
- 6 = strongly disagree

- ___ 1) I rarely think about how I look.
- ___ 2) When I'm not the size I think I should be, I feel ashamed.
- ___ 3) I think a person is pretty much stuck with the looks they are born with.
- ___ 4) It doesn't matter how hard I try to change my weight; it's probably always going to be about the same.
- ___ 5) When I can't control my weight, I feel like something must be wrong with me.
- ___ 6) I am more concerned with what my body can do than how it looks.
- ___ 7) I rarely worry about how I look to other people.
- ___ 8) I feel ashamed of myself when I haven't made the effort to look my best.
- ___ 9) A large part of being in shape is having that kind of body in the first place.
- ___ 10) Even when I can't control my weight, I think I am an okay person.
- ___ 11) I think it's more important that my clothes are comfortable than whether they look good on me.
- ___ 12) I think more about how my body feels than how my body looks.
- ___ 13) I feel like I must be a bad person when I don't look as good as I could.
- ___ 14) I think a person can look pretty much how they want if they are willing to work at it.
- ___ 15) When I'm not exercising enough, I question whether I am a good enough person.
- ___ 16) I rarely compare how I look with how other people look.

- 1 = strongly agree
- 2 = agree on the whole
- 3 = agree a little
- 4 = disagree a little
- 5 = disagree on the whole
- 6 = strongly disagree

- ___ 17) During the day, I think about how I look many times.
- ___ 18) I really don't think I have much control over how my body looks.
- ___ 19) The shape you are in depends mostly on your genes.
- ___ 20) I would be ashamed for people to know what I really weigh.
- ___ 21) I often worry about whether the clothes I am wearing make me look good.
- ___ 22) I never worry that something is wrong with me when I am not exercising as much as I should.
- ___ 23) I think a person weight is mostly determined by the genes they are born with.
- ___ 24) I can weigh what I'm supposed to when I try hard enough.

We are interested in the feedback you get from important people in your life regarding your appearance. Choose the number on the scale that best indicates the extent to which the feedback given by each person listed below is positive or negative.

1) The feedback I receive from my mother about my weight is:
I'm too thin 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I'm too heavy

2) The feedback that I receive from my mother about my general appearance is:
Extremely negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely positive

3) The feedback I receive from my father about my weight is:
I'm too thin 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I'm too heavy

4) The feedback that I receive from my father about my general appearance is:
Extremely negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely positive

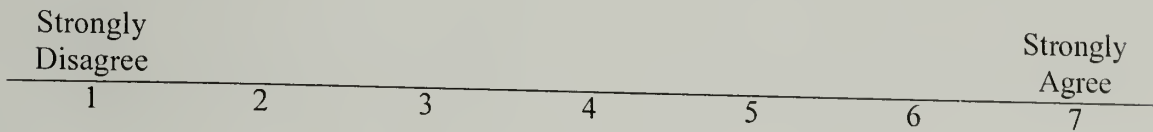
5) The feedback I receive from my romantic partners about my weight is:
I'm too thin 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I'm too heavy

6) The feedback that I receive from romantic partners about my general appearance is:
Extremely negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely positive

7) The feedback I receive from my female friends about my weight is:
I'm too thin 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I'm too heavy

8) The feedback that I receive from female friends about my general appearance is:
Extremely negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely positive

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with each of the following statements by placing the number that best corresponds to your response on the line preceding each statement. In responding to each statement, please use the group identification that best describes you.



1) ___ Overall, being (African American, Latino, Asian, White) has very little to do with how I feel about myself.

2) ___ In general, being (African American, Latino, Asian, and White) is an important part of my self- image.

3) ___ My destiny is tied to the destiny of other (African American, Latino, Asian, White) people.

4) ___ Being (African American, Latino, Asian, White) is important to sense of what kind of person I am.

5) ___ I have a strong sense of belonging to (African American, Latino, Asian, White) people.

6) ___ I have a strong sense of attachment to other (African American, Latino, Asian, White) people.

7) ___ Being (African American, Latino, Asian, White) is an important reflection of who I am.

8) ___ Being (African American, Latino, Asian, White) is not a major factor in my social relationships.

We are interested in your role models. Please list five people you consider to be important role models in your life. Choose people who are generally known to the public (i.e. not friends or family members).

My role models are:

1) _____

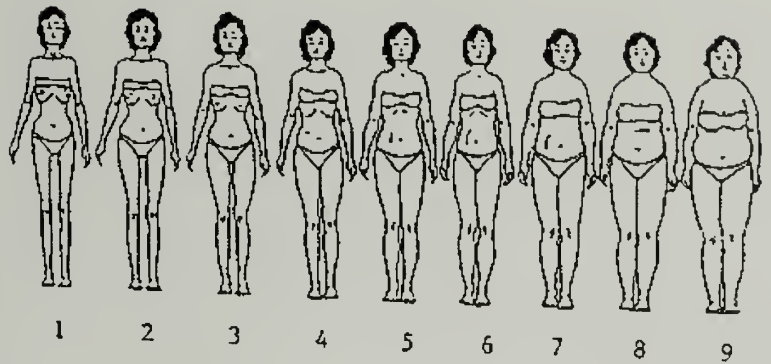
2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

Contour Drawing Rating Scale



1. Which figure best represents the one you feel is ideal/the best? _____

2. Which figure best represents your current figure? _____

3. What is your current weight? _____

4. How much would you like to weigh? _____

5. How tall are you? _____ (feet and inches)

6. How tall would you like to be? _____

Please indicate:

Your year of graduation from UMass: ___ 2000 ___ 2001 ___ 2002 ___ 2003
___ other

Your race/ethnicity: ___ African American ___ Latina ___ Asian ___ White
___ other

Your college major (or expected college major): _____

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