

8-2010

Sociocultural Attitudes and Expectations As A Result of Media Internalization: An Exploration of Potential Cultural Resiliency Factors Among Mexican-American College Women

Natalie Marie Perez
University of Texas-Pan American

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/leg_etd



Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Perez, Natalie Marie, "Sociocultural Attitudes and Expectations As A Result of Media Internalization: An Exploration of Potential Cultural Resiliency Factors Among Mexican-American College Women" (2010). *Theses and Dissertations - UTB/UTPA*. 414.
https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/leg_etd/414

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations - UTB/UTPA by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact justin.white@utrgv.edu, william.flores01@utrgv.edu.

SOCIOCULTURAL ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS AS A RESULT OF MEDIA
INTERNALIZATION: AN EXPLORATION OF POTENTIAL CULTURAL RESILIENCY
FACTORS AMONG MEXICAN-AMERICAN
COLLEGE WOMEN

A Thesis

by

NATALIE MARIE PEREZ

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Texas-Pan American
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2010

Major Subject: Clinical Psychology

SOCIOCULTURAL ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS AS A RESULT OF MEDIA
INTERNALIZATION: AN EXPLORATION OF POTENTIAL CULTURAL RESILIENCY
FACTORS AMONG MEXICAN-AMERICAN
COLLEGE WOMEN

A Thesis
by
NATALIE MARIE PEREZ

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Kristin Croyle
Chair of Committee

Dr. Frederick Ernst
Committee Member

Dr. Grant Benham
Committee Member

August 2010

Copyright 2010 Natalie Marie Perez

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Perez, Natalie Marie, Sociocultural Attitudes and Expectations as a Result of Media Internalization: An Exploration of Potential Cultural Resiliency Factors Among Mexican-American College Women. Master of Arts (MA), August, 2010, 32 pp., references, 27 titles.

This study involved a final sample of 153 Mexican-American college women who viewed photos of models who exemplify the thin ideal and models who are considered average and overweight according to society's standards of beauty. The order of the photos was manipulated to determine if subjection to the thin ideal would negatively affect body satisfaction and or affect how the participants judged the models who did not meet the thin ideal. Manipulation did not negatively affect how participants judged the average and overweight models. In addition, upon manipulation, both groups rated themselves as heavier despite group assignment. Finally, acculturation level was not associated with body satisfaction. Additional measures were included to assess potential resiliency factors.

DEDICATION

The completion of my Master's degree and thesis would not have been possible without the continued love and support of my family and friends, especially my mother, Diana M. Perez.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Kristin Croyle for her continued wisdom, support, guidance and patience throughout the lengthy process of completing my requirements. Additional thanks to Dr. Croyle and the Clinical Psychology graduate program for providing the resources and funding necessary to complete my experimental research. My extended thanks also go to my thesis committee members: Dr. Frederick Ernst and Dr. Grant Benham, for their time, knowledge and support. In addition, I want to thank the dean of the program, Dr. Phillip Gasquoine, who continuously motivates students to excel and carry out challenging feats.

Finally, thank you to Christine Gutierrez, a dear friend and research collaborator, whose assistance with data collection and entry was a tremendous benefit to the completion of my thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	2
Media and Body Image.....	2
Expectations of Others.....	7
Acculturation and Body Image in Latinas	8
Potential Cultural Resiliency Factors among Highly Acculturated Latinas	10
Purpose of the Study.....	12
Hypotheses.....	12
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY	14
Purpose of Deception.....	14
Participants.....	14
Measures	15
Pictorial Stimuli	18
Procedure	19

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS.....	21
Hypothesis 1: Expectations of Others.....	21
Hypothesis 2: Media, Body Image, and Potential Resiliency Factors.....	21
Hypothesis 3: Acculturation and Body Satisfaction.....	23
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	24
Limitations and Future Considerations.....	26
Conclusion.....	27
REFERENCES.....	28
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	32

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Physical attractiveness is something that is deemed as essential in order to be socially accepted, achieve greater success in life, and attract more potential romantic partners than those who are less attractive (Winkler & Rhodes, 2005; Brenner & Cunningham, 1992). The ideal body shape portrayed for women in the U.S. is consistently thin (Miller & Halberstadt, 2005), as seen in approximately 95% of media depictions of what is considered attractive (Watson & Vaughn, 2006). The detrimental effects for those who struggle to attain an unrealistically thin ideal can be seen in eating disorders which are significantly more common among women than in men (Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, & Kelly, 1986).

However, women with strong social support, supportive cultural backgrounds, and religious faith may show more resilience in the face of the thin ideal (Jarry & Kossert, 2007; Hamilton, Mintz, & Kashubeck-West, 2007). The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of media images, cultural background, social support, and religious faith in shaping women's perceptions and acceptance of their own body shape and size. This study provides a particularly unique contribution to the literature because of its focus on these variables among Mexican-American women.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Media and Body Image

The most obvious enterprisers of images of the ideal body shape for both males and females are the mass media (Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2001; Hausenblas, Janelle, & Gardner, 2004; Willinge, Hons, Touyz, & Charles, 2006). It is through the media that we can see how the shape of beauty has dramatically changed, especially in the last fifty years. Models chosen in the media have become significantly thinner over the last several decades (Hawkins, Richards, Granley, & Stein, 2004; Hausenblas et al., 2004). For example, Garner, Garfinkel, Schartz, and Thompson (1980) examined the changing of body shape ideals through models from Playboy magazine. Researchers found that body shape ideal decreased over a period of 20 years (1959-1978) and the average weight for models was significantly lower than the women of the represented era. Extending on this research, a second study conducted by Wiseman, Gray, Mosiamann, and Ahrens (1992) evaluated an additional 10 years spanning from 1979-1988 and found that within the 30-year time period bust to hip ratios steadily decreased while the weight of the Playboy models was 13-19% lower than healthy weight levels. One study examined 18 magazines read by young women, 87% of the models were “below average weight” (Vaughan &

Fouts, 2003). The standards of beauty have evolved to that of “extreme thinness” which very often is substantially below what is medically recommended (Engeln-Maddox, 2006).

The media portrays physical ideals that are drastic and unrealistic for most individuals (Willinge et al., 2006) such as an ultra-thin physique for women and a V-shaped mesomorphic build for men. Studies of both women’s magazines and television show an overwhelming majority of “young, tall, and extremely thin women” (Tiggemann, 2006). The ideal body shape of “glamorous” models is usually more than 20% underweight (Brown & Dittmar, 2005) with the average model weighing 23% less than the average woman (Goodman, 2002). In addition, numerous studies have found that women with small waist to hip ratios are deemed most attractive (Swami, 2008). This ideal body shape is “biogenetically difficult” and practically impossible to obtain (Hawkins et al., 2004) without unhealthy dieting and obsessive exercising (Hausenblas et al., 2004).

Body image dissatisfaction is growing in both men and women with two thirds of young women and one third of young men being dissatisfied (Willinge et al., 2006). This trend has especially increased in the last five decades (Hausenblas et al., 2004). There has been a rise in anabolic-androgenic steroid use among men and a steady rise in men suffering from muscle obsession, also known as muscle dysmorphia (Leit, Gray, & Pope, 2002). Women on average want to lose about 5-10 pounds in order to be more satisfied with their bodies while men seek to gain about 30 pounds in muscle (Baird & Grieve, 2006). It is important to note that body image dissatisfaction is not only present among adults. For example, it was reported that 28%-55% of preadolescent girls are dissatisfied with their figures and desire to be thinner, many of whom are already of normal weight or are underweight according to their BMI scores (Clark & Tiggemann,

2007). This is of significant importance due to the fact that these unrealistic ideals are being formulated at a young age and could have effects into adulthood.

Research studies have shown that body image satisfaction declines after exposure to media images in fashion magazines and television (Vaughan & Fouts, 2003; Tiggeman, 2006; Ayala, Mickens, Galindo, & Elder, 2007; Bessenoff & Del Priore, 2007; Mellor, McCabe, Ricciardelli, & Merino, 2008; Hawkins et al., 2004; Posavac, Posavac, & Posavac, 1998). For example, Myers and Biocca (1992) found body shape perception was negatively influenced by as little as 30 minutes of television viewing in young women.

Groesz, et al. (2002) conducted the “first statistical review of the effects of experimental manipulations of the thin ideal of the body image of girls and women,” including 25 studies (43 effect sizes), to evaluate the main effects of media images of the slender body shape ideal. The results of the meta-analytic review (effect size -0.30) showed that females’ body images were negatively influenced by viewing thin models as compared to viewing both average and oversize models. A longitudinal study in adolescents conducted by Stice, Spangler, & Agras (2006) revealed that females who were dissatisfied with their bodies and received a randomized subscription to fashion magazines became even more dissatisfied with their bodies.

The effect of exposure to thin models on body image satisfaction has been confirmed beyond women in the United States. Although this effect has been less studied in men, Stice et al., (2006) found that males who were exposed to television images of an “ideal” male physique reported higher levels of body dissatisfaction than males who viewed neutral images. Additionally, the International Body Project (IBP-I), which evaluated 7,434 individuals across 10 major world regions regarding body weight ideals and body dissatisfaction (4,019 women and 3,415 men from 26 countries), found that substantial exposure to Western media

(including thin models) was correlated with a desire to be thinner (Swami et al., 2010). These results provide strong evidence that exposure to the thin ideal leads to body dissatisfaction.

Body Image and Disordered Eating

There are an estimated 5-10 million people struggling with bulimia, anorexia, or compulsive overeating, including many at the college age (Goodman, 2002). Studies show that 5-20 percent of college students exhibit eating disorder pathology while up to 33 percent of women resort to unhealthy means to control their weight through the use of laxatives, diuretics and vomiting (Goodman, 2002).

Images of excessively thin women in the media are a substantial contributing factor in the rise of eating disorders (Goodman, 2002; Hawkins et al., 2004). Vaughan & Fouts (2003) found that changes in eating disorder symptomatology among adolescent girls were a result of changes in fashion magazine exposure. In addition, young girls and women who strive to look like celebrities and fashion models who meet the thin-ideal are more likely to develop binge-purge behaviors (Tiggeman, 2006). A study conducted by Hawkins et al. (2004) found that after viewing images of the thin ideal, women's scores on the bulimia, purging, and anorexia subscales of the Eating Disorder Inventory were much higher as compared to women in the control group.

Internalization of the thin ideal appears to be the causal factor linking media exposure to disordered eating and other clinically related disorders (Groesz et al., 2002; Baird & Grieve, 2006; Tiggeman, 2006). Internalization assesses to what extent the individual accepts society's ideal standard of beauty as their own (Engeln-Maddox, 2006). Studies reveal that the degree of internalization of the thin ideal is strongly associated with appearance of eating disorder

pathology (Groesz et al., 2002; Hawkins et al., 2004; Cusumano, & Thompson, 1997; Hausenblas et al., 2004; Wedell, Santoyo, & Pettibone, 2005; Stein, Corte, & Ronis, 2010). Negative affect, especially depression is a known risk factor for eating pathology as well (Sanchez-Johnson, Hogan, Wilkens, & Fitzgibbon, 2008). Repeated exposure to thinness consistently reminds individuals of their deficits which may affect their overall well being by eliciting feelings of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Vaughan & Fouts, 2003; Hawkins et al., 2004; Krones, Stice, Batres, & Orjada, 2004). A study conducted by Hawkins et al. (2004) found that women's mood was negatively affected upon viewing images of the thin ideal, including a drop in self-esteem scores. Repeated exposure to the thin ideal increases women's negative emotions to where they feel badly not only about their shape but about themselves (Groesz et al., 2002). A number of experimental studies support these results (Tiggeman, 2006).

Increased exposure to the thin ideal of beauty also inculcates the public with unrealistic propositions that could serve as additional mediators in the development of psychological disorders. A study conducted by Engeln-Maddox (2006) found that women associate many potential rewards with meeting the thin ideal body shape. Women who were dissatisfied with their appearance felt that their lives would substantially improve for the better through social, psychological and practical rewards as mediated by their level of internalization.

The understanding of why this idea of being rewarded is being formulated can be seen through the mass media's exhortation, through literature and advice, that attaining the ideal body is a necessity in becoming socially and financially successful (Cachelin, Phinney, & Schug, 2006).

Upon exposure to the thin ideal, women seem to have internalized the message and have reported that they feel that their lives would be happier and more successful if only they were thin (Clark & Tiggeman, 2007). Moreover women who have over-internalized the thin ideal are positive

that it is the *only* way to accomplish a life of love, success, happiness and popularity (Hawkins et al., 2004). Therefore their sense of self-worth and overall satisfaction with life becomes equated with the importance of meeting the ideal body shape.

Expectations of Others

These unrealistic ideas of having a successful future if we are able to meet the thin ideal body shape also insidiously extend to how we view others around us. In a meta-analysis, Langolis, Kalakanis, Rubenstein, Larson, Hallam, & Smoot (2000) reported that individuals who are considered attractive (by meeting the thin ideal) are most often judged as competent in their occupations, as being more successful and are favorably treated by others. Males who were exposed to the thin ideal through television felt that this ideal was important in a potential mate (Willinge et al., 2006). A study surveying 37 countries, about what was most important in a life partner found that physical attractiveness was essential among both men and women (Swami et al., 2010). In addition, this thin ideal portrayed in magazines, films and television may be sending the message to men and women that attaining the ideal body shape is a person's most important attribute (Groesz et al., 2002). Experimental evidence shows that even brief exposure to the thin ideal can change how people judge others (Wedell et al., 2005).

Empirical evidence reveals that the manifestation of these expectations can be seen in various forms especially through body related teasing and criticism from parents and peers (Clark & Tiggeman, 2007). The unrealistic standards that have been adopted from the media in turn contribute to the internalization of the thin ideal in those being ridiculed. These nonmedia variables of teasing and criticism have also contributed to the development of eating disorder pathology and low body image (Vaughan & Fouts, 2003). This type of appearance related dissatisfaction as a result of judgment from others has been shown to affect individuals' overall

well-being including increasing social anxiety and decreasing self-esteem (Engeln-Maddox, 2006).

Acculturation and Body Image in Latinas

Acculturation has been defined as the degree to which an ethnic minority retains his or her cultural values, norms and ideologies versus adapting to the dominant Anglo-American culture (Cachelin et al., 2006). Acculturation level is an influence in the healthy or maladaptive development of minorities in a new culture (Torres & Rollock, 2004). Finding a balance between both cultures can be difficult and at times stressful, contributing to “acculturative stress” (Torres & Rollock, 2004).

The Hispanic population is projected to grow to 25% of the total U.S. population by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Hispanics are the fastest growing minority in the United States but have been “largely ignored in psychological research” (Joiner & Kashubeck, 1996). Latina women, especially those of Mexican-American descent, are understudied in both body image and disordered eating behaviors. The small body of research that has examined Latinas includes a variety of backgrounds such as Mexican-American, Cuban-American, and Puerto Rican. However, due to cultural and regional differences, it is imperative to examine each Hispanic group individually to better understand the dynamics underlying body image, potential disordered eating behaviors, and degree of acculturation.

Eating disorders have been commonly associated with European and European American women but recent research suggests that girls and women of ethnic minority groups are also at risk (Cachelin et al., 2006; Sanchez-Johnson et al., 2008). Specifically, evidence suggests that Latinas are just as likely as Whites to develop eating pathology (Wildes, Emery, & Simons, 2001) though Latina women may be more prone to binge eating than White women (Cachelin et

al., 2006). Joiner and Kashubeck (1996) found a high prevalence of anorexia and bulimia symptoms, body dissatisfaction, and low self-esteem in Mexican-American women. In the small body of literature that has examined Latinas, acculturation level to the European American culture appears to be a mediating factor in disordered eating and dieting (Goodman, 2002). Women who are Anglo acculturated often exhibit eating disorder characteristics (Ayala, et al., 2007) but not much is known about Latinas who are not as Anglo acculturated in regard to maladaptive eating behaviors (Sanchez-Johnsen et al., 2008).

Latinas have been shown to have high rates of obesity and, as a result, may be especially susceptible to body dissatisfaction, eating disorders (Sanchez-Johnsen et al., 2008), low self-esteem and even depression. Mexican-American women have been found to be heavier than both white and non-white women. For example, 75% of adult Mexican-American women are overweight or obese whereas only 58% of White women are overweight or obese. Ayala et al. (2007) surveyed Mexican-American youth, of which 34% of the sample was overweight as compared to the national average for youth which is 16%. According to the results of the study, 76% of females and 61% of males reported body dissatisfaction upon viewing the thin ideal in the media. These results show that Latinas are susceptible to maladaptive eating behaviors and concerns (Chamorro & Flores-Ortiz, 1998).

Studies have linked high Anglo acculturation with obesity (especially among less educated men and women). Fuentes-Afflick & Hessol, (2008) note that U.S. born Latinas have a higher body mass index (BMI) than Latinas born outside of the U.S. Hubert, Snider, & Winkleby (2005) found that, among labor workers from a community sample of 18-64 years of age, high acculturation was strongly associated with higher BMI scores.

Latinas who are highly Anglo acculturated exhibit high levels of disordered eating behaviors, especially those who are second generation college women (Chamorro & Flores-Ortiz, 1998). It seems likely that level of acculturation and internalization, along with cultural values, and beliefs (and possibly even education) may all be mediating factors in the development of low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and or maladaptive eating behaviors among Latinas. On the other hand, despite high Anglo acculturation levels, not all Latinas may be as susceptible to high levels of internalization of the thin ideal and thus will not experience body dissatisfaction and the associated clinical implications. This could be due to the fact that Latinas may have potential resiliency factors imbedded within their culture that prevent those that are Anglo acculturated from being dissatisfied with their bodies in the same way that more Mexican oriented Latinas may be less susceptible.

Potential Cultural Resiliency Factors among Highly Acculturated Latinas

The Latin American community is well known for their practice of Christian beliefs, especially Catholicism. Frequent church attendance (religiosity) among Latinos is a protective factor against suicide (Oquendo et al., 2005) and could be an indicator of spirituality. It is possible that it could also serve as a protective factor against feeling bad about themselves as a result of not meeting the thin ideal. This could be due to the fact that depressed persons are those who often commit suicide. If religiosity is an indicator of spirituality then people with poor body image who consider themselves spiritual may experience less of the depressive symptoms that often lead to suicide. This influence of faith has been known to be a driving force behind the idea of “leaving things in the Lord’s hands.” It has been shown that these external beliefs dominate the Hispanic culture and may be even stronger among communities of low socioeconomic status (Soh, Touyz, & Surgenor, 2006).

Often traditional family values, including language and beliefs, are a core component in Mexican oriented Latinas' ideologies and behavior. These cultural factors could provide some protection from internalization of the thin ideal portrayed in the media despite their level of Anglo acculturation. For example one traditional family value that is often seen is the importance of taking pride in one's heritage. This idea includes being able to embrace the unique culture rather than being ashamed of being different. These values of being proud of ethnic tradition could lead Latinas who are high in Anglo acculturation to exhibit high body satisfaction despite not meeting the cultural ideal due to the fact that a more voluptuous frame is often praised in the Mexican culture (Goodman, 2002).

The idea of "familism" among the Hispanic community is the notion of having strong family relationships that are of substantial social support which could even extend to family friends who are treated and accepted as part of the family. This social support system is prevalent among Hispanic communities many of whom have extended family living in the same household. Due to larger households the strength of this support is higher compared to other racial/ethnic groups (Meyler, Stimpson, & Peek, 2006). Social support among Mexican-Americans has been found to be positively associated with successful Anglo acculturation (Meyler et al., 2006). In addition, Meyler et al. (2006) found that high levels of social support positively influenced self-esteem among the Mexican-American community. Having these strong relationships of social support could protect Latinas from developing maladaptive thoughts about their body image despite high Anglo acculturation. This could be the result of expressing temporal body image concerns of not meeting society's standard of beauty to a close friend or family member who rejects the concerns and supplants them with positive praise;

therefore never allowing the concern to escalate to that of poor body image or its related clinical implications.

Purpose of the Study

Although research has been conducted in the areas of body image, the media, acculturation, and how the thin ideal influences our expectations of others, there has not been a study that has examined media internalizations and its influence on body satisfaction and body shape expectations for others while also taking into consideration potential cultural resiliency factors and acculturation level. It is clear that Latinas are underrepresented in the literature and much of the research that has been conducted among Latinas has been a conglomeration of various Hispanic backgrounds. Each of these groups are culturally unique and should be looked at individually.

This experiment examined how Mexican-American college women viewed themselves and others after viewing photos of slender models who met the thin-ideal body shape in the media. It was hypothesized that women reporting low Anglo acculturation would be more satisfied with their bodies. Social support and faith measures were included to determine if they served as additional resiliency factors in high Anglo acculturated women who were not dissatisfied with their bodies.

Specifically, it was hypothesized that (H1) participants who rated models who met the thin ideal first would then be more critical of average and overweight models than participants who first rated overweight models, (H2) participants who rated models who met the thin ideal first would then rate themselves as heavier than women who first rated heavier models, and this effect would be moderated by resiliency, and (H3) participants reporting low Anglo acculturation

would be more satisfied with their bodies in comparison to women reporting high Anglo acculturation.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of Deception

The title of the study when presented to the students for recruitment was “Fashion and Culture” so that participants would not be aware of the hypotheses of the study. A fashion questionnaire was included at the beginning of the study before participants were asked to rate their body image to support this deception. In addition, when viewing pictorial stimuli of attractive models, participants were asked to rate both their level of attractiveness (related to study hypotheses) and how fashionable they appeared in order to reinforce the apparent purpose of the study. In order to ensure that participant responses were not influenced by knowledge of the true study hypotheses, three questions were included at the end of the study asking what the participants felt the purpose of the study was. In addition, all participants received an e-mail notification at the conclusion of the study that informed them of the true purpose of the study which included contact information of the primary investigator if they had any questions or concerns.

Participants

The sample included 171 female undergraduate women from the University of Texas-Pan American. 95.1% reported that they were Mexican-American, 2.4% Asian, 1.8% Caucasian, and

.6% other. Only the participants who were of Mexican-American descent were included in the data analysis ($N=156$). In addition, eight participants had a specific idea of the purpose of the study, three of which reported that this knowledge affected how they responded. These three participants were excluded from data analysis. As a result, only 153 participant responses were used for data analysis.

The age range of participants was 18 to 59 ($Mean= 23.02$, $SD= 6.718$). 60.8% of participants reported they were single, 21.6% unmarried but in a committed relationship, and 13.1% were married. 49% of participants reported their first language to be English, while 39.9% reported their first language to be Spanish. Overall, 83.7% were bilingual. Participants average weight was 139.45 pounds ($s=35.51$). Participants were also asked to report height in inches so that BMI could be calculated. However reports of height were so variable and obviously inaccurate that they were not included in analysis. Only women participated in the study. Factors affecting body image and acculturation for men were considered beyond the scope of this study and inclusion of men would have required a much larger sample and more complex experimental procedure.

Measures

Contour Drawing Rating Scale (CDRS)

The CDRS consists of nine male and nine female contour drawings of which only the female drawings were included in the study. The drawings were designed with detailed features and of precisely graduated sizes (Thompson & Gray, 1995). Test-retest reliability over a one week period was adequate ($r = .78$). Validity of the drawings for assessing perceived body size was examined by the degree of correspondence between an individual's reported weight and

current self ratings. Contour drawing selections were strongly correlated with reported weight ($r=.71, p < .0005$; Thompson & Gray, 1995). Mean score and standard deviation for the CDRS for this sample is reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Scale Means and Standard Deviations.

	CDRS	BSQ-SF	CDRS-A	ARSMA-II
<i>N</i>	152	150	148	148
<i>Mean</i>	4.59	43.73	5.69	109.26
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	1.90	17.74	1.79	13.76

Note. CDRS=Contour Drawing Rating Scale, BSQ-SF= Body Shape Questionnaire-Short Form, CDRS-A= Contour Drawing Rating Scale-Analog Version, and ARSMA-II= Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican-Americans-II.

Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ)

The BSQ is a 34-item likert scale that is designed to measure concerns about body shape among young women (Cooper, Taylor, Cooper, & Fairburn, 1987). The BSQ focuses on the phenomenological experience of “feeling fat.” Concurrent validity was established by significant correlations between the BSQ and the Body Dissatisfaction subscale of the EDI (Eating Disorders Inventory) and significant correlations between the BSQ and Eating Attitudes Test scores among patients with Bulimia Nervosa. Known groups validity was also established with significant differences in BSQ scores for bulimia patients and non patients. When

administering the BSQ in the current study there was an oversight that resulted in only 15 items being administered to participants. This subset of items yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .94. Given the high internal consistency of the subset of items, the 15 BSQ items were retained in analysis and will be referred to as the BSQ Short Form (BSQ-SF) so as not to confuse it with the full BSQ. Mean score and standard deviation for the BSQ-SF for this sample is reported in Table 1.

Contour Drawing Rating Scale- Analog Version (CDRS-A)

The CDRS was included a second time but was changed to a continuous rating version. Participants marked a vertical line upon the horizontal line provided under the silhouette that they felt matched their body type. The analog version was included to allow participants a more fine-grained response option in case their view of their body type changed only subtly upon viewing the photos of the thin ideal. Mean score and standard deviation for the CDRS-A for this sample is reported in Table 1.

Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican-Americans-II (ARSMA-II)

The ARSMA-II (Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995) is a well-established likert-type scale for measuring acculturation in Mexican-Americans that includes different cultural domains inherent in the acculturation experience, including language use and preference, ethnic identity and classification, cultural heritage, and ethnic behaviors and interaction. The ARSMA-II uses a bidimensional approach to measure cultural orientation toward the Mexican culture (Mexican Orientation subscale [MOS], 17 items) and the Anglo culture (Anglo Orientation subscale [AOS], 13 items) independently. The ARSMA-II has been shown to have high reliability and

strong construct validity in English and Spanish, with a Cronbach's *alpha* of .88 and .86 for the MOS and AOS, respectively, and concurrent validity with the original ARSMA of $r=.89$ (Cuellar et al., 1995). Cronbach's alpha for this sample was .80 for the total scale, .91 for the MOS, and .69 for the AOS subscales. Mean score and standard deviation for the ARSMA-II for this sample is reported in Table 1.

Faith and Social Support Scales

The measures that were originally included to assess faith and social support were eliminated from analysis due to an error in the protocol which resulted in only 17 of the 45 items for the God Mediated subscale of the Belief in Personal Control Scale, and 12 of the 19 items for the Multidimensional Social Support Scale. As a result, both variables were not tested as potential resiliency factors.

Pictorial Stimuli

Two stimulus books were compiled that were composed of images of models in swimsuits and normal clothing. All of the images were initially chosen by the researcher and then rated by 20 graduate students on the basis of match to body size anchors on the CDRS, homogeneity of attractiveness, skin tone, perceived race/ethnicity, and perceived age. These ratings were then examined in order to ensure that the images portrayed what was intended (i.e. cultural standards of beauty), represented a variety of racial backgrounds, and were matched to the appropriate corresponding CDRS silhouette. The top 40 photos based on the homogeneity of the ratings were used for both sets of stimulus books (the thin ideal models and the average and overweight models). The stimulus book composed of thin ideal models (*Thin Ideal Book*)

included photos rated between 1 and 3 on the CDRS which is consistent with a thin to very thin appearance. The stimulus book composed of average and overweight models (*Average Book*) included photos rated between 5 and 9 on the CDRS which is consistent with an average to extremely overweight appearance.

The models pictured were European American, African American and Hispanic. In addition, the women pictured all had a variety of skin tones, were not well-known models and all appeared to be within the same age range of mid-twenties to early thirties. All photos were taken from modeling websites and modeling runway shows from the internet.

Under each photo, participants were asked to rate how fashionable they felt the model was (for purposes of deception) and how attractive she was (e.g. “What is her overall rating of attractiveness?”). Both questions were presented in a likert-type format with responses ranging from 1-- not at all fashionable/attractive to 5-- extremely fashionable/attractive.

Procedure

The informed consent form was explained and administered to the participants upon their arrival to testing. The participants were randomly assigned to either the *Thin First Group* (viewing thin models first) or the *Average First Group* (viewing heavy and average weight models first). The order of materials was as follows: demographic information, fashion questionnaire, CDRS, BSQ-SF, 1st stimulus book of photos (*Thin Ideal Book* for *Thin First Group* and *Average Book* for *Average First Group*), CDRS-A, 2nd stimulus book of photos (*Average Book* for *Thin First Group* and *Thin Ideal Book* for *Average First Group*), ARSMA-II, and purpose of study questions. Other self-report measures were also included as part of a larger project which are not described here. The approximate time it took to complete the study was

60-90 minutes. Before leaving, each participant was asked to leave her e-mail address. At the conclusion of data collection, debriefing information on the purpose and necessary deception of the study was sent to participants via e-mail.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: Expectations of Others

An independent samples t-test was used to examine if there were differences between participant ratings of attractiveness in that the *average book* models would be rated as less attractive by the *thin first group* than by the *average first group*. The mean of the attractiveness ratings for the *average book* models from the *average first group* was 62.96 ($s=13.72$). The mean of the attractiveness ratings for the same models from the *thin first group* was 61.96 ($s=13.59$). An independent samples t-test found no differences between the attractiveness ratings assigned by the two groups, $t(145)= 0.44, p>.05$. The groups were rated as not significantly different in attractiveness.

Hypothesis 2: Media, Body Image and Potential Resiliency Factors

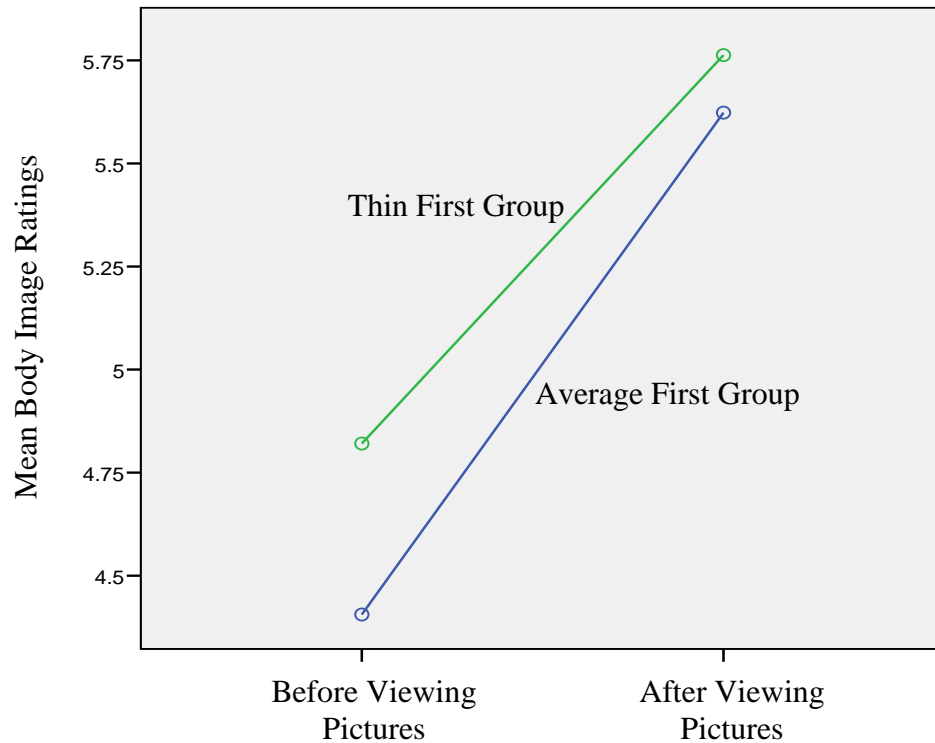
Hypothesis 2 proposed that participants who rated models who met the thin ideal first would then rate themselves as heavier than women who first rated heavier models, unless resiliency factors were present. Prior to testing this hypothesis, means for each group on initial body image ratings on the CDRS were examined in order to verify that the two groups were initially equal, prior to viewing any photos. The mean initial body image rating for the *thin first group* was 4.81 ($s=1.96$). The mean initial body image rating for the *average first group* was

4.34 ($s=1.81$). An independent samples t-test showed no significant differences between the groups in these ratings, $t(150) = -1.53, p > .05$.

A 2X2 mixed model ANOVA was then used to test Hypothesis 2. There was no main effect for group assignment, in that the *thin first group* and the *average first group* did not differ in their ratings of their own body image after viewing the first set of model pictures, $F(1,145) = .86, p = .36$. However, there was a main effect for the within-subjects variable in that women rated themselves as significantly heavier after viewing the models regardless of group assignment, $F(1,145) = 312.53, p < .001$. There was also a statistically significant interaction between pre and post ratings and group assignment, $F(1,145) = 5.070, p = .026$. However, the pattern of results suggests that the significant main effect for pre versus post ratings of body image is the more powerful finding (see Figure 1).

Due to the errors in the reproductions of the scales measuring religious faith and social support, described in the previous section, testing of the impact of resiliency factors on body image was not carried out.

Figure 1. Body Image Ratings for Participants Before and After Viewing Photos, Separated by Group



Hypothesis 3: Acculturation and Body Satisfaction

It was hypothesized that participants reporting low Anglo acculturation would be more satisfied with their bodies in comparison to women reporting high Anglo acculturation. To initially explore these relationships, a correlational analysis was used to determine if Anglo acculturation, as assessed by the AOS subscale of the ARSMA-II, was related to body image. The AOS was not significantly correlated with the CDRS administered prior to viewing any photos ($r = .038, p < .05$), nor with the CDRS-A after viewing photos ($r = .002, p > .05$), nor the BSQ-SF ($r = .022, p > .05$). Due to these nonsignificant findings, this hypothesis was not explored further.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Results of this study indicated that participants rated models from the *average book* (including both beautiful average and overweight women) as equally attractive, whether or not they had first viewed models exemplifying the thin ideal. This finding shows that it is possible that our perception of attractiveness is not as immediately malleable as some studies have suggested (Vaughan & Fouts, 2003; Tiggeman, 2006; Ayala et al., 2007; Bessenoff & Del Priore, 2007; Mellor et al., 2008; Hawkins et al., 2004; Posavac et al., 1998). Perhaps the weight of previous socialization and media exposure is too heavy to manipulate with a short-term experimental procedure. Alternatively, it is possible that the Mexican-American participants in this study were not as judgmental of models who did not meet the thin ideal, but instead acknowledged the person's level of attractiveness based on other domains (skin, hair, facial features, etc.) rather than just body type, so the experimental manipulation had little effect. It is possible that a more curvaceous figure is considered just as attractive as the non-curvaceous thin ideal if persons are judged based on several domains rather than just one.

The second hypothesis examined whether or not viewing models who met the thin ideal would negatively affect how women judged their own figures. Results indicated that there were no group differences in how women rated their figures despite the manipulation of having viewed either the *thin ideal book* models or the *average book* models first. In fact, both groups

rated themselves as significantly heavier regardless of which models they viewed first, even though models in the *average book* were in many cases significantly heavier than the participants. A possible explanation for this finding is that viewing these beautiful women, regardless of body size, triggered feelings of unattractiveness in the participants who then expressed these feelings of unattractiveness by rating themselves as heavier. If this explanation is correct, then it suggests that the participants have partially confounded the ideas of attractiveness and body size so that their ratings of model attractiveness are not necessarily completely dominated by body size (see findings for Hypothesis 1), but that their own feelings of unattractiveness may trigger concerns about their own body size.

Results also showed that Anglo acculturation level was not related to body satisfaction. The literature has shown mixed results when it comes to the influence of acculturation level on body image. Some studies have found that greater acculturation level to the Anglo culture is associated with greater body dissatisfaction and maladaptive eating behaviors (Ayala et al., 2007; Chamorro & Flores-Ortiz, 2000; Cachelin et al., 2006; Sanchez-Johnson et al., 2008) while others have found that acculturation level does not influence body image dissatisfaction or maladaptive eating behaviors (Joiner & Kashubeck, 1996; Lester & Petrie, 1995; Wildes et al., 2001). In this case, acculturation level did not negatively affect this particular demographic. Perhaps this is due to the unique characteristics of the Rio Grande Valley, where the population is predominantly Hispanic. Mexican-American and Mexican women exhibit more curvaceous figures than Anglo women, the average Latina woman being significantly more overweight than her white counterparts (Hubert et al., 2005). The Rio Grande Valley may represent a cultural enclave that partially protects women from maladaptively internalizing the thin ideal, regardless of level of Anglo acculturation, resulting in higher body satisfaction regardless of body size. This

may be due to both favorable comparisons between oneself and the surrounding more curvaceous women, and to potentially protective cultural factors that widely affect the population rather than being more dependent on ones' own level of acculturation.

Limitations and Future Considerations

This study had several limitations. The most regrettable limitation to the study was the error in the reproduction of the BSQ and the faith and social support scales leading to the deletion of the later scales. Potential resiliency factors that are unique to the culture were unable to be tested which may have better explained the results. In addition, the participants used were a convenience sample specific to young, educated, Mexican-American women. However this sample also had advantages due to the fact that research among Mexican-American women is underrepresented in the literature. Also body image concerns are often present among college aged women, making the age group in this sample well-suited for the research questions of interest. A third limitation is that it is possible that the manipulation used was not powerful enough to have an effect on participants' body images, even though media images in the natural environment do. Although several studies have shown an effect using similar methodologies (Vaughan & Fouts, 2003; Tiggeman, 2006; Ayala et al., 2007; Bessenoff & Del Priore, 2007; Mellor et al., 2008; Hawkins et al., 2004; Posavac et al., 1998), choice of another design or a longer period of exposure to the images may have had a stronger effect.

Future research should include exploring potential resiliency factors among Hispanic women. These factors may prove to be culturally protective variables that prevent women from developing maladaptive thoughts about their own body shapes as well as their judgments of others' bodies. In addition, future research should explore if beauty is perceived as primarily specific to body shape and size or if many aspects of beauty such as facial symmetry, body size,

and fashionable appearance are included. Such research may show that it is not specifically the thin ideal that negatively affects women's body satisfaction, but instead unfavorable overall beauty comparisons. This may in turn influence new clinical interventions for women suffering from eating disorders, anxiety or depression related to low body image.

Conclusion

Overall, the results showed that the Mexican-American women in this sample were not notably affected by viewing models exemplifying the thin ideal, even though literature in this area suggested that they would be. Surprisingly, it seems apparent that women may evaluate beauty on several domains rather than just body type. This potential phenomenon shows that women may feel dissatisfied with their bodies as a result of viewing beautiful women in the media regardless of body size. In addition, acculturation level also did not have the hypothesized effect, possibly due to the widespread influence of resiliency factors within the participants. Future studies investigating cultural resiliency factors are sorely needed in this area so that we may further understand the factors impacting body image in the Mexican-American community.

REFERENCES

- Ayala, G.X., Mickens, L., Galindo, P., & Elder, J.P. (2007). Acculturation and body image perception among Latino youth. *Ethnicity and Health, 12*(1), 21-41.
- Baird, A.L., & Grieve, F.G. (2006). Exposure to male models in advertisements leads to decrease in men's body satisfaction. *North American Journal of Psychology, 8*(1), 115-122.
- Bessenoff, G.R., & Del Priore, R.E. (2007). Women, weight, and age: Social comparison to magazine images across the lifespan. *Sex Roles, 56*, 215-222.
- Brenner, J.B., & Cunningham, J.G. (1992). Gender differences in eating attitudes, body concept, and self-esteem among models. *Sex Roles, 27* (7/8), 413-437.
- Brown, A., & Dittmar, H. (2005). Think "thin" and feel bad: The role of appearance schema activation, attention level, and thin-ideal internalization for young women's responses to ultra-thin media ideals. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 24*(8), 1088-1113.
- Cachelin, F.M., Phinney, J.S., & Schug, R.A. (2006). Acculturation and eating disorders in a Mexican-American community sample. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 30*, 340-347.
- Chamorro, R., & Flores-Ortiz, Y. (2000). Acculturation and disordered eating patterns among Mexican-American women. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 28*, 125-129.
- Clark, L., & Tiggeman, M. (2007). Sociocultural influences and body image in 9- to 12-year-old girls: The role of appearance schemas. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 36*(1), 76-86.
- Cooper, P.J., Taylor, M.J., Cooper, Z., & Fairburn, C.G. (1987). The development and validation of the body shape questionnaire. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 6*, 485-494.
- Cuellar, I., Arnold, B., & Maldonado, R. (1995). Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican-Americans-II: A revision of the original ARSMA scale. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 17*, 275-304.
- Cusumano, D.L., & Thompson, J.K. (1997). Body image and body shape ideals in magazines: Exposure, awareness, and internalization. *Sex Roles, 37*(9/10), 701-721.

- Englen-Maddox, R. (2006). Buying a beauty standard or dreaming of a new life? Expectations associated with media ideals. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 30, 258-266.
- Fuentes-Afflick, E., & Hessol, N.A. (2008). Acculturation and body mass among Latina women. *Journal of Women's Health*, 17(1), 67-73.
- Garner, D. M., Garkinkel, P. E., Schwartz, D., & Thompson, M. (1980). Cultural expectations of thinness in women. *Psychological Reports*, 47, 483-491.
- Goodman, R. (2002). Flabless is fabulous: How Latina and Anglo women read and incorporate the excessively thin body ideal into everyday practice. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 79(3), 712-727.
- Groesz, L.M., Levine, M.P., & Murnen, S.K. (2002). The effect of experimental presentation of thin media images on body satisfaction: A meta-analytic review. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 31, 1-16.
- Hamilton, E. A., Mintz, L., & Kashubeck-West, S. (2007). Predictors of media effects on body dissatisfaction in European American women. *Sex Roles*, 56, 397-402.
- Hausenblas, H.A., Janelle, C.M., & Gardner, R.E. (2004). Viewing physique slides: affective responses of women at high and low drive for thinness. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(1), 45-60.
- Hawkins, N., Richards, P.S., Granley, H.M., & Stein, D.M. (2004). The impact of exposure to the thin-ideal media image on women. *Eating Disorders*, 12, 35-50.
- Hubert, H.B., Snider, J., & Winkleby, M.P.H. (2005). Health status, health behaviors, and acculturation factors associated with overweight and obesity in Latinos from a community and agricultural labor camp survey. *Preventive Medicine*, 40, 642-651.
- Jarry, J. L., & Kossert, A. L. (2007). Self-esteem threat combined with exposure to thin media images leads to body image compensatory self-enhancement. *Body Image*, 4, 39-50.
- Joiner, G.W., & Kashubeck, S. (1996). Acculturation, body image, self-esteem, and eating disorder symptomatology in adolescent Mexican-American women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 20, 419-435.
- Krones, P.G., Stice, E., Batres, C., & Orjada, K. (2005). In vivo social comparison to a thin-ideal peer promotes body dissatisfaction: A randomized experiment. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 38, 134-142.
- Langolis, J.H., Kalakanis, L., Rubenstein, A.J., Larson, A., Hallam, M. & Smoot, M. (2000). Maxims or myths of beauty? A meta-analytic and theoretical review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126, 390-423.

- Leit, R.A., Gray, J.J., & Pope, H.G. (2002). The media's representation of the ideal male body: A cause for muscle dysmorphia? *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, *31*, 334-338.
- Mellor, D., McCabe, M., Ricciardelli, L., & Merino, M.E. (2008). Body dissatisfaction and body change behaviors in Chile: The role of sociocultural factors. *Body Image*, *5*, 205-215.
- Meyler, D., Stimpson, J.P., & Peek, M.K. (2006). Acculturation and self-esteem among older Mexican-Americans. *Aging and Mental Health*, *10*(2), 182-186.
- Miller, E. & Halberstadt, J. (2005). Media consumption, body image and thin ideals in New Zealand men and women. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, *34*(3), 189-195.
- Myers, P.N. Jr., & Biocca, F.A. (1992). The elastic body image: The effect of television advertising and programming on body image distortions of young women. *Journal of Communications*, *42*, 108-133.
- Oquendo, M.A., Dragatsi, D., Harkavy-Friedman, J., Dervic K., Currier, D., Burke, A.K., & Mann, J.J. (2005). Protective factors against suicidal behavior in Latinos. *Journal of Nervous Mental Disorders*, *193*, 438-443.
- Posavac, H.D., Posavac, S.S., & Posavac, E.J. (1998). Exposure to media images of female attractiveness and concern with body weight among young women. *Sex Roles*, *38*, 187-201.
- Sanchez-Johnson, L.A.P., Hogan, K., Wilkens, L.R., & Fitzgibbon, M.L. (2008). Correlates of problematic eating behaviors in less acculturated Latinas. *Eating Behaviors*, *9*, 181-189.
- Silverstein, B., Perdue, L., Peterson, B., & Kelly, E. (1986). The role of the mass media in promoting a thin standard of bodily attractiveness for women. *Sex Roles*, *9*(10), 519-532.
- Soh, N.L., Touyz, S.W., & Surgenor, L.J. (2006). Eating and body image disturbances across cultures: A review. *European Eating Disorders Review*, *14*, 54-65.
- Stein, K.F., Corte, C., & Ronis, D.L. (2010). Personal identities and disordered eating behaviors in Mexican-American women. *Eating Behaviors*, *11*(3), 197-200.
- Stice, E., Spangler, D., & Agras, W.S. (2001). Exposure to media-portrayed thin-ideal images adversely affects vulnerable girls: A longitudinal experiment. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *20*, 271-289.
- Swami, V. (2008). The influence of body weight and shape in determining female and male physical attractiveness. *Advances in Psychology Research*, *56*, 45-70.

- Swami, V., Frederick, D.A., Aavik, T., Alcalay, L., Allik, J., Anderson, D., & Zivcic-Becirevic, I. (2010). The attractive female body weight and female body dissatisfaction in 26 countries across 10 world regions: Results of the International Body Project I. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *36*(3), 309-324.
- Thompson, M.A., & Gray, J.J. (1995). Development and validation of a new body-image assessment scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, *64*(2), 258-269.
- Tiggemann, M. (2006). The role of media exposure in adolescent girls' body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness: Prospective results. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *25*(5), 523-541.
- Torres, L. & Rollock, D. (2004). Acculturative distress among Hispanics: The role of acculturation, coping, and intercultural competence. *Multicultural Counseling and Development*, *32*, 155-167.
- Vaughan, K.K., & Fouts, G.T. (2003). Changes in television and magazine exposure and eating disorder symptomatology. *Sex Roles*, *49*(7/8), 313-320.
- Watson, R., & Vaughn, L. M. (2006). Limiting the effects of the media on body image: Does the length of a media literacy intervention make a difference? *Eating Disorders*, *14*, 385-400.
- Wedell, D.H., Santoyo, E.M., & Pettibone, J.C. (2005). The thick and the thin of it: Contextual effects in body perception. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, *27*(3), 213-227.
- Wildes, J.E., Emery, R.E., & Simons, A.D. (2001). The roles of ethnicity and culture in the development of eating disturbances and body dissatisfaction: A meta-analytic review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, *21*, 521-551.
- Willinge, A., Hons, B., Touyz, S., & Charles, M. (2006). How do body-dissatisfied and body-satisfied males and females judge the size of thin female celebrities? *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, *39*(7), 576-582.
- Winkler, C., & Rhodes, G. (2005). Perceptual adaptation affects attractiveness of female bodies. *British Journal of Psychology*, *96*, 141-154.
- Wiseman, C. V., Gray, J. J., Mosimann, J. E., & Ahrens, A. H. (1992). Cultural expectations of thinness in women: An update. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, *11*, 85-89.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Natalie Marie Perez received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology on December 2006, at the University of Texas-Pan American. On August 2010, she received her Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology.

Natalie began gaining research experience as an undergraduate through both paid and volunteered positions. Natalie is a published researcher and has won awards for her research at the local and regional level. Natalie has presented her research through the years at local, regional and national conferences. Natalie is a past President of The National Honor Society for Psychology (Psi Chi) and has won various academic accolades including the Dean's Award for the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences in 2009.

Natalie volunteers her services to the community and has experience working with victims of domestic violence, juvenile offenders, and has had supervised experience working with inpatient at risk adolescents.

Natalie's research and therapy interests include (1) cross-cultural psychology/multicultural mental health (2) body image (3) romantic and interpersonal relationships (i.e. interventions and developmental studies) (4) trauma (i.e. child sexual abuse, post traumatic stress, and domestic violence) and (5) personality theory. Natalie's permanent address is 1203 South Huisache Street, Pharr, TX, 78577.