

# Latina Ethnic Identity, Social Media and Community Influence on Body Image, Perceptions of Self, and Body Altering Health Behaviors: Investing Beyond One-dimensional Approaches



Liliana Rojas-Guyler, PhD, CHES, Shameka Y Neely, PhDc, Ana Montalvan, BS  
University of Cincinnati- Health Promotion & Education program

## Latinas in the Greater Cincinnati MSA

### 2013-14 Community Health Status Survey<sup>1</sup>

N=251, female n=101

Random phone interview oversample

**The sample-** The average age was 36; 38.2% married & 52.6% never married, 39.1% < HS, 35.7% HS/GED & 7.7% College grads; 40.2% work part time, 18.2% FT & 26.2% in school; 50.7% at 100% poverty level or below, 26.5% between 100% & 200% FPL; 65.2% White, 2.9% Black, 31.1% mixed race.

**Health Status-** 6 out of 10 reported 0 physically or mentally unhealthy days; 45.3% have health coverage/insurance; 46.8% have normal weight & 53.2% are obese (of these 14.2% severely or very severely obese); 66.6% exercised in prior month.

**Latinas had higher rates than men of:** Asthma (18.6% vs. 8.6%)\*; Cancer (10.4% vs. 4.3%)\*; Chronic Lung Disease (6.9% vs. 1.7%)\*; Heart Disease (10.3% vs. 7.8%); High Blood Pressure (28.4% vs. 25%); Stroke (2.6% vs. 0.9%)\*; Severe Allergies (25.2% vs. 10.4%)\*; & Depression (20.9% vs. 10.3%)\*

\* Statistically significant difference t-test (p<.05)



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1 Interact for Health. (2015). Health of Latinos in Greater Cincinnati. Cincinnati, OH: Author.

2 Isabel, M. G. (2010). *Dangerous Curves: Latina Bodies in the Media*. NYU Press.

3 Agne, April A., et al. "The cultural context of obesity: exploring perceptions of obesity and weight loss among Latina immigrants." *Journal of immigrant and minority health* 14.6 (2012): 1063-1070.

## Ethnic Identity, Social Media and Body Image

**Relevance-** Body image and body perception are known to be relevant factors in weight and body altering behaviors, however all factors do not influence ethnic groups in a similar way.

The literature shows poor understanding of motivational aspects among Latinos. Specifically, body image messages in the media along with mixed cultural expectations are problematic among Latinas.<sup>2,3</sup> Interventions that address these complex mix of factors are necessary to develop culturally relevant programs.

### Results

The mean age was 38.55; 60.8% were married & 30.0% single; 28.3% <8<sup>th</sup> grade; 19.5% HS/GED; 31.2% BS degree; 33.3% full time employment; 15.2% part time; 35.7% not working; **Income-** 40% at <\$20K and 35.3% at \$40K+

**Health Status-** On average physical activity 2.75 days/week & based on BMI (31.8% normal, 40.9% overweight & 27.3% Obese).

**Social, Family & Media Influence-** Overall the level of influence reported was low (83%). Results show that there is higher influence on feelings rather than on behavior change. Partners & Significant others had more influence on feelings and eating behaviors. Male friends had the highest influence on exercise behaviors.

**Ethnic Identity-** Results showed that participants (2/3 below 12 pts) had a high level of ethnic identity.

**Media and Social Media Influence-** 39.2% say the media affects how they feel about their body; 31.3% say Social Media influences how they feel about their body, how they eat and exercise; 34.3% report media makes them feel negative or very negative about their body (1-extremely positive, 5-extremely negative); 42.9% report the media makes them eat less or a lot less (1-A lot less, 5-A lot more); 27.3% report the media makes them increase their exercise some or a lot (1-decrease a lot, 5- increase a lot). Social Media is 3<sup>rd</sup> in level of influence after TV and Printed Media (in that order).

**Body Image and Satisfaction-** A majority of participants show satisfaction with their body. They are most dissatisfied with their weight, muscle tone, body shape, hips and thighs.

**Perceptions of Self-** 40.5% perceive themselves to be at normal weight; of these only 46.9% (n=15) were of normal wt. However only 31.8% of sample was of Normal BMI.

**Body Changing Health Behaviors-** 72.3% are actively adjusting their nutrition/behaviors to modify their body weight. However, a large majority (90%+) are using 'healthy' strategies (e.g. eating less, exercising more, etc.). 47.3% report making changes to their diet to be healthier; 27.1% report changing eating habits to lose weight; 43.2% found it difficult or very difficult to make these changes; 44.3% report their body image affects their dietary & exercise patterns.

**Correlations-** Ethnic Identity was positively correlated with Social, Family & Media Influence (r=.283, p=.05) and the subscales. Being influenced by Social Media was correlated with Media Influence in general (r=.538, p<.01) and feeling influenced in a negative way about one's body (r=.542, p<.01).

**Regression-** Neither Media, Social, Family & Media Influence, Ethnic Identity or Body Satisfaction were statistical predictors of Social Media, Physical Activity of BMI. However, Ethnic Identity scale scores were predictive of 8% of the variance in Social, Family & Media Influence scale scores in a linear regression (enter) model ((F= 5.471, p< .023, df= 63) with Beta= 1.093 (t= 2.339, p< .023, R<sup>2</sup>= .080).