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

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Latinas in the Greater Cincinnati MSA

2013-14 Community Health Status Survey
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)

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 Latinas. Specifically, body image messages in the media along with mixed cultural expectations are problematic among Latinas.2,3 Interventions that address these complex mix of factors are necessary to develop culturally relevant programs.


Research Questions
1. What correlations exist between Body Mass Index, Body Satisfaction, Ethnic Identity, Social, Family & Media Influence, and Social Media Influence among Latinas in the Greater Cincinnati Area?
2. Can the effect that the Media has on the Body Image of Latinas be predicted by Ethnic Identity, Body Satisfaction, or Social, Family & Media Influence?

Results

The mean age was 38.55; 60.8% were married & 30.0% single; 28.3% <8th 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 little 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 3rd 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<.01) 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, R²= .080).