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Exploration of Ideal Body Image Among African-American Women

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M.A., Psychology, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2001

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in partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Psychology

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### Abstract

Body image dissatisfaction is a pervasive problem, most notably among women, that is neither well understood nor well defined. Inconsistent and overly narrow definitions of body image make it difficult to draw conclusions regarding the degree and type of dissatisfaction across cultural and/or various ethnic groups. Thus far, research has largely focused on size, shape and weight concerns, ignoring physical features that may be salient to women belonging to non-Caucasian ethnic groups. This study explored African-American preferences for weight, waist-to-hip ratio (WHR), and salient physical appearance attributes, as well as their identification with the “thin” ideal, racial identity salience, and physical racial identity.

Participants were 119 African-American women and 39 Caucasian women recruited from the St. Louis metropolitan area. Participants’ actual and ideal physical attributes, current perceived WHR and weight, ideal WHR and weight, and reactions to the WHR and weight assessment task were assessed and examined in relation to ethnic group membership, endorsement of racial identity, identification with the “thin” ideal, and identification with traditional African physical attributes.

It was hypothesized that, in comparison to Caucasian women, African-American respondents would have less discrepancy between their actual and ideal physical attributes and report more ethnic specific features (ESF). Second, it was hypothesized that internalization of the thin ideal would be negatively related to physical racial identity, racial identity salience and number of (ESF) reported; but number of ESF would be positively related to physical racial identity and racial identity salience. Third, it was hypothesized that internalization of the thin ideal would be positively related to the discrepancy between perceived current versus ideal weight selection, and mediate the relationship between racial identity salience, physical racial

identity, ideal weight and ESF reported. Finally, it was predicted that African-American respondents would report more concerns with the WHR and weight selection task than Caucasian respondents.

Results indicate that African-American women reported less discrepancy between their actual-own body image ideal and more ESF as actual traits, but not as ideal traits. There was a negative relationship between internalization of the thin ideal and acceptance of African physical features, but acceptance of African physical features was not related to the number of ESF reported. The salience of race for self identity was positively related to the number of ESF reported as representative of the cultural ideal only. Although a significant interaction between physical racial identity and internalization of the thin ideal was found, further analyses did not support the hypothesized moderation effect. Finally, African-American participants reported less of a discrepancy between their perceived current and ideal weight, but not WHR, and reported more concerns with the WHR/FRS measure than the Caucasian participants.

The present study lends support to the differences in salient physical characteristics across ethnic groups. Further exploration of the differences between, and within, a variety of ethnic groups is warranted. Recommendations are offered related to adjustments to several of the measures used in the present study. Strategies to increase understanding and completion of the measures, further examine relationships among racial identification and body image measures, and improve reliability of findings are discussed.

### Acknowledgments

If we are fortunate, somewhere along life's path we are privileged to find encouragement, inspiration, guidance, and the support we need (desperately, at times) to discover and accomplish our goals and desires. There were countless times over the years when this particular goal seemed very far away and I questioned my ability to reach it. Without a handful of exceptional people who guided me through the ups and downs we call life, my life and the process of graduate school would have been much less enjoyable.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....2

Acknowledgments.....4

Introduction.....7

    Body Image in African-American Women.....8

        African-American Women and the Caucasian “Ideal”.....9

            Summary of Current Research and Theory.....10

                Body Size.....10

                Relationship Between Body Shape and Physical Attractiveness.....12

                Skin Color.....13

                Facial Features and Hair.....17

Methodological Biases in Research.....20

    Sample Biases.....21

    Assessment Measures.....23

    Methodology.....24

Summary and Hypotheses.....25

Method.....28

    Participants.....28

    Subject Predictor Variables.....29

    Dependent Variables.....33

    Procedure.....38

Results.....39

Discussion.....52

References.....65

Appendix A.....79

Appendix B.....93

### Exploration of Ideal Body Image Among African-American Women

The exact definition of “body image” is elusive. Body image has been categorized as an “umbrella” term (Thompson, Penner & Altabe, 1990, p. 22) and as a “sponge phrase” (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999, p. 7). Unfortunately, it has become such an oft-used “catch-all” term that the exact definition is often dependent upon who uses it (Thompson et al., 1990). The idea that the image of the body is important in making decisions about others, and about one’s own self, is not a novel concept. Our culture is a visual one and we are constantly presented with stimuli defining what is beautiful and acceptable. Certainly, attributes of beauty in women have varied over time, but these were usually viewed as ideals rather than as reality.

While physical beauty ideals have not necessarily become more of a focal point over time, the images have become more specific, precise, and widely disseminated. The manner in which an individual views her/his body often impacts how that individual perceives the entire self. For example, a negative view of one’s body has been linked to feelings of depression (Ackard, Croll & Kearney-Cooke, 2002; Saucier, 2004), social anxiety (Cash, Theriault & Annis, 2004; Saucier, 2004), low self-esteem (Cook-Cottone & Phelps, 2003; Rosen & Ross, 1968; Saucier, 2004; Vander Wal, 2004; Webster & Tiggeman, 2003), and disordered eating patterns (Mintz & Betz, 1988; Perez & Joiner, 2003; Stice & Shaw, 2002). Women’s concern with body image has become so common it has been described as “normative discontent” (Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1984).

The study of body image has been hampered by a variety of factors, including a lack of continuity in the definition and measurement of the construct across studies that make it difficult to draw conclusions regarding the impact of body image. Additionally, current research in the



field of body image has been focused on a Caucasian, female norm group. Measures used in body image research were designed for this population (Altabe, 1996) and the appropriateness of their use with any other population has been questioned (Story et al., 1995). This raises a valid concern considering that measures used in body image research often omit features such as skin color and hair that are salient to racial and ethnic minority groups (Miller et al., 2000).

This paper will explore physical features of body image salient to African-American women. For the purpose of this paper, body image is defined to include body size and shape, hair (color, length, texture), skin color, and facial features. A discussion of salient features of body image identified in previous research will be provided. In addition, the evolutionary theory for the significance of female body size and weight distribution will be presented. Throughout the paper, African-American females' body image relevant behaviors and the body image preferences of African-American males are discussed. Biases toward the concerns of Caucasian females present in current research methodology will also be discussed.

### Body Image in African-American Women

Body shape and weight are not the focal points of concern among African-American women (Smith, Thompson, Raczynski & Hilner, 1999) that they are among Western, Caucasian women. African-American women place more emphasis on skin color (Altabe, 1998; Bond & Cash, 1992; Falconer & Neville, 2000; C. Hall, 1995; R. Hall, 1995; Hill, 2002; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Okazawa-Rey, Robinson & Ward, 1986; West, 1995) and hair (Green, White & Whitten, 2000; C. Hall, 1995; Okazawa-Rey et al., 1986) than do Caucasian women. According to C. Hall (1995), African-American women's perceptions of physical beauty and body image include the multiple dimensions of hair, skin color, weight and facial features. Current measurement of

body image is not designed to take all of these features into account and, thus, is inaccurate for ethnic and racial minority groups.

*African-American Women and the Caucasian “Ideal”*

When examining body image among ethnic minority women, it is not readily apparent what ethnic group or beauty standard serves as the referent (Falconer & Neville, 2000; Smith, Burlew & Lundgren, 1991). African-American women in Western society may find themselves idealizing and comparing themselves and others to the European beauty standard. Those who accept the European/Western beauty standards view others whose physical appearance most closely resembles the European ideal as more desirable (Chambers et al., 1994). Although it may be a trend for some African-American women to “emulate whiteness” (Hill, 2002, p. 80), it is not the case that *all* African-American women idealize and desire the Caucasian beauty standard of the dominant Western culture.

The image of a beautiful woman, including blond hair, blue eyes, and Caucasian features, has been offered up to all ethnic groups in American society (Chambers et al., 1994; Rubin, Fitts & Becker, 2003). Considering that this ideal is based on a majority, Caucasian culture, certain features of this body image ideal are even more difficult to attain for women who are not of Caucasian descent (e.g., Caucasoid facial features). Furthermore, not all cultures place the same “beauty” value on female features. For example, the thin ideal is not valued in some African cultures where “bigness” is associated with respect, competence, and membership in the upper echelons of society (Ofusu et al., 1998). In addition, a wider range of body weights receive acceptance in African-American culture compared to Caucasian culture (Abrams, Allen & Gray, 1993; Baturka, Hornsby & Schorling, 2002; Freedman, Carter, Sbrocco & Gray, 2004).

Although a wider range of body types are accepted within the African-American culture, it does not necessarily mean that African-American women have less of a struggle with their body image (Bond & Cash, 1992). In fact, body image concerns for African-American women may actually increase in response to the beauty ideal based on a Caucasian, middle class standard (West, 1995). Buchanan (1993) suggests that African-American women are confronted with the same pressures as Caucasian women to obtain the Caucasian ideal and they make greater sacrifices to attain the ideal, particularly when hair and skin tone issues are included. As African-American women find themselves immersed in the majority culture, their identification with the majority culture is more likely to occur.

Although shape and weight receive considerable attention in research (Demarest & Allen, 2000; Fallon & Rozin, 1985; Freedman et al., 2004; Furnham & Baguna, 1994; Patel & Gray, 2001; Pumariega, Gustavson, Gustavson, Motes, & Ayers, 1994; Senekal et al., 2001), for African-American women, skin color (Bond & Cash, 1992; Hill, 2002; Neal & Wilson, 1989), hair texture, length and style (C. Hall, 1995; R. Hall, 1995; Miller et al., 2000; Neal & Wilson, 1989), facial features (C. Hall, 1995; R. Hall, 1995; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Smith et al., 1991; Zebrowitz, 1997), and personal style or presentation (Parker et al., 1995; Rubin, et al., 2003) are also important. These features have often been excluded in assessments of body image satisfaction and must be examined.

#### *Summary of Current Research and Theory*

*Body size.* A majority of research suggests that African-American women are satisfied with a larger body size than Caucasian women find acceptable (Abrams et al., 1993; Botta, 2000; Cash & Henry, 1995; Chandler et al., 1994; Kemper et al., 1993; Miller et al., 2000; Molloy & Herzberger, 1998; Patel & Gray, 2001; Smith et al., 1999). Further, compared to Caucasian

women, African-American women express less concern with being overweight (Cash & Henry, 1995; Kumanyika, Wilson, & Guilford-Davenport, 1993; White, Kohlmaier, Varnado-Sullivan, & Williamson, 2003) and are less driven to achieve thinness (Abrams et al., 1993; Rucker & Cash, 1992). In spite of these findings, however, African-American and Caucasian women express a similar dissatisfaction related to actual and desired size (Smith et al., 1999; Thomas, 1988). Although African-American women report a higher degree of investment in appearance than Caucasian women until later in life (Eitel, 2003; Smith et al., 1999), they remain more satisfied with their appearance even with a larger body size (Smith et al., 1999). Caucasian and African-American women express similar ratings of the importance of appearance during midlife, and in later years of life, Caucasian women place more emphasis on appearance than African-American women (Eitel, 2003). This suggests that Caucasian and African-American women utilize different criteria to measure the affective experience of the body (Rucker & Cash, 1992; Rubin et al., 2003).

Discrepancies regarding body size preferences and acceptance of body size in the African-American population are indicative of the need for further research. Molloy and Herzberger (1998) suggest that African-American women may elect *not* to strive for the Caucasian ideal because they believe African-American males have a preference for a larger size. However, although some research supports the claim that African-American males prefer larger sized African-American females (Freedman et al., 2004; Jackson & McGill, 1996; Ofusu et al., 1998), ample evidence exists to the contrary (Singh, 1994b; Singh & Luis, 1995; Smith et al., 1999).

According to West (1995), African-American culture encourages the conceptualization of beauty based on a multitude of physical traits. Chambers et al. (1994) suggest that the

Afrocentric idea of beauty steers away from a strict focus on physical attributes and toward attractiveness as related to the ability to contribute to the success of the group. This holistic view emphasizes both physical and spiritual qualities (Chambers et al., 1994) rather than separating the two. It is likely that the wider acceptance of body size is based on African-Americans' less rigid conceptualization of beauty and emphasis on making "what you've got work for you" (Parker et al., 1995, p.103).

*Relationship Between Body Shape and Physical Attractiveness.*

Evolutionary psychological theorists argue that the appearance of the female form is directly related to mate selection and, subsequently, species survival. Proponents of evolutionary psychology suggest that specific components of the female size, shape, and body presentation are cues for males to use in selecting a mate with high reproductive value. Theorists focus on the importance of waist to hip ratio (WHR; Singh, 1993a; 1993b; 1994a; 1994b; Singh & Luis, 1995; Singh & Young, 1995), one of several appearance attributes, in signaling reproductive fitness.

Waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) is defined as the ratio of waist to hip size (Singh, 1993a). Females tend to have a body shape with more fat on the hips, and subsequently, a lower WHR than males (Singh, 1993a). It is important to keep in mind that body size/appearance is variable depending on the distribution of weight/fat. Singh and Luis (1995) suggest that body fat distribution, not amount of body fat, is the determining factor in sex-specific body shapes, and thus, attractiveness.

Evidence indicates that males prefer a female body fat distribution (lower WHR) as opposed to a higher WHR more indicative of a male body fat distribution (Singh, 1993a; Singh & Luis, 1995). Although Singh (1993a; 1994b) suggested that neither weight nor WHR alone is

the most important factor in attractiveness, Singh and Young (1995) did find that heavy figures with a low WHR were rated as less attractive to men than thin figures with a low WHR.

Additionally, normal weight figures with a low WHR are seen to represent health, youth, attractiveness and a high reproductive potential (Singh, 1993a). From this evidence, it appears that body weight combined with WHR is important to ratings of female attractiveness by males.

Singh (1993a; 1993b) and Singh and Luis (1995) suggest further that although other factors will be used to assess attractiveness, WHR should not vary by culture in its significance for indicating attractiveness in females. For example, African-American males and females judged figures of normal weight with a “feminine” (low) WHR as most attractive (Singh, 1994b; Singh & Luis, 1995). Further, in the U.S, African-American and Caucasian males and females used similar standards when rating the attractiveness of female figures (Singh, 1994b). Based on this research, Singh (1994a) challenges the conclusion of Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz and Thompson (1980) regarding images of women’s bodies in the media becoming thinner by reporting that, regardless of their weight, the WHR of attractive women remained constant over time.

Finally, regardless of the method in which body size and shape has been measured (body size, WHR), it does seem that a wider range of body types are accepted among African-Americans (Abrams et al., 1993; Freedman et al., 2004; Kumanyika et al., 1993). It seems safe to conclude that a variety of physical features combine to produce the effect of attractiveness/beauty in African-American women. It is also reasonable to conclude that body size alone may not be the focal point when judging beauty. In contrast to Caucasian culture, the African-American culture places importance on other physical features.

*Skin color.* Historically, skin color has played a prominent role in the lives of African-Americans. Throughout history, beginning in the early days of the first American colonies and spanning the centuries to present day, African-Americans with lighter skin and Caucasoid features have received more favorable attention than their darker skinned counterparts (see Hill, 2002; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Okazawa-Rey, Robinson, & Ward, 1986 for reviews). The lighter skin tone and Caucasoid features were seen as proof that the individual had some ‘whiteness’ in their genetic makeup (Neal & Wilson, 1989). Thus, advantages were received based on the idea that whiteness was superior to blackness. Any amount of whiteness in one’s ancestry was significant and resulted in the individual being viewed as more desirable, genetically superior, and worthy of higher status employment positions (Neal & Wilson, 1989).

The social, political and economic conditions experienced during slavery laid the foundation for the current “color consciousness” experienced by the African-American population (Okazawa-Rey et al., 1986). Variations in skin tone continue to foster judgment within the African-American community. Keith and Herring (1991) suggest that skin tone is responsible for social stratification within the African-American community. Socially, light colored skin is associated with “positive and counter-stereotypic traits” while dark skin is associated with negative traits (i.e., poverty, aggressiveness; Maddox & Gray, 2002). Light skin is seen as a valuable social resource allowing the individual to receive preferential treatment in a variety of situations (Okazawa-Rey et al., 1986) including educational and occupational opportunities, income, and attaining prominence within the community (Keith & Herring, 1991; Maddox & Gray, 2002). In addition, skin tone plays a factor in perceived attractiveness of females by males (Hill, 2002) and in dating and marriage (Okazawa-Rey et al., 1986). The role of skin tone within the African-American community remains a controversial topic.

The pressure for African-Americans to attain a lighter ideal has been present throughout history. This pressure has brought with it the conscious impulse to lighten skin color to a more desirable, more acceptable shade. R. Hall (1995) referred to this “response by African-Americans in their attempts to assimilate into a society characterized by cultural domination” as the “bleaching syndrome” (p.172). African-Americans have gone to extreme lengths to achieve acceptance, receive social advantages, and gain a higher status in the social hierarchy. In order to achieve these goals, lighter skin was considered a requisite quality. Products such as skin bleaches and fade creams were developed with the intent of altering the skin tone to the preferred “light” shade (Buchanan, 1993; Neal & Wilson, 1989). Regardless of the negative side effects these products are liable to cause, both physically and psychologically, they are specifically marketed to African-American women who show particular concern with meeting the socially acceptable ideal (Neal & Wilson, 1989).

Although more research is needed (C. Hall, 1995), the majority of evidence thus far indicates that lighter skin tones are considered most attractive for females within the African-American population (Altabe, 1998; Bond & Cash, 1992; Buchanan, 1992; Hill, 2002; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Porter, 1991). However, in a study of skin tone satisfaction, Bond and Cash (1992), found that women who were judged to have a “medium” skin tone were more likely than “light” or “dark” skin tone women to select a “light” ideal most discrepant from their actual skin color. Both the “light” and “dark” skin tone groups reported ideals close to their actual skin color. In fact, darker skinned African-American women are generally less likely to select a “light” skin tone as ideal. The authors proposed that darker skinned women may view lighter skin to be highly discrepant from their actual skin tone and thus do not see it as their ideal. Finally, although a majority of the respondents reported they were satisfied with their current



skin color, approximately one-third admitted they would make their complexion lighter if it were possible, while less than 20% desired a darker skin color.

Although Bond and Cash (1992) concluded that skin color does not appear to be central to body image satisfaction in African-American women, other evidence points to the contrary. African-American women who were less satisfied with the color of their skin also expressed less satisfaction with their overall physical appearance (Falconner & Neville, 2000) and lower self-esteem (Robinson & Ward, 1995). Overall, women with lighter skin tones are viewed as more attractive (Hill, 2002; see Neal & Wilson, 1989 for a review), and regardless of their own skin tone, African-American women perceive that African-American men find light skin most attractive (Bond & Cash, 1992; Coard, Breland, & Raskin, 2001). Further, unattractive women are perceived to have darker skin tones (Neal, 1988 as cited in Neal & Wilson, 1989). Finally, although lighter skin tones are thought to be ideal, additional evidence suggests that either extreme on the skin color continuum is likely to produce dissatisfaction (Coard et al., 2001; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Porter, 1991; Robinson & Ward, 1995).

Historically, skin that was “too white” was not accepted in the African-American community while skin that was “too dark” was viewed as unattractive and belonging to the lower class (Maddox & Gray, 2002; see Neal & Wilson, 1989 for a review). The current findings suggest that preferences lie along a continuum of acceptable skin color, with the most desirable skin color falling somewhere between “too Black” and “not Black enough” (Robinson & Ward, 1995).

The discrepancies that exist regarding the impact of skin color on overall physical satisfaction suggest this area as worthy of further attention. For example, Jackson and McGill (1996) concluded that skin tone was *not* important in ratings of same-race attractiveness. This

conclusion was drawn based on African-American male and female college student respondents ( $N=23$  males, 20 females; mean age=21 years) who ranked the importance of a list of physical characteristics (i.e., “lighter skin tone”) associated with attractiveness. With no acknowledgement of the inadequacy of the sample size, the authors hypothesized that their findings might be due to African-American young adults placing less emphasis on the importance of lighter skin tones (associated with Caucasian Americans). These findings are contradictory to the historical importance of skin tone previously mentioned. While there may be relevant cultural transitions, more research is needed before suggesting that the importance of skin tone in the African-American population has lessened.

*Facial features and hair.* Zebrowitz (1997, p. 122) related facial attractiveness to symmetry, suggesting that symmetrical features are representative of health and fitness, valuable mating characteristics. In many non-Western cultures, facial scarification and tattooing are standard beauty practices for women (Zebrowitz, 1997, p. 117). The practice of adding symmetry to the face by scarification and tattooing is thought to be advertisement for the mating value of the women. The women with the more elaborate, more symmetrical patterns may be viewed as more “fit” to reproduce, according to evolutionary theory. Although these practices are not common in Western cultures, facial features remain an essential factor in the judgment of feminine beauty.

Adult women, in contrast to adult men, exhibit more youthful facial features. For women, youthful facial features, as opposed to mature, adult features, are viewed as attractive and preferred (for a review see Zebrowtiz, 1997 pp. 134-137). “Babyfaced” features, including large eyes, a round face, small nose, small chin, high eyebrows, and full, red lips, are reminiscent of youth (Zebrowitz, 1997, p.134). The significant “mature” feature that is preferred in women

is the presence of high, defined cheekbones (Zebrowtiz, 1997, p. 134). The use of cosmetics by women aims to create, or enhance, the presence of a youthful, child-like appearance. For example, lipstick is used to redden the lips, eyeliner to “open” the eyes, and blush is used to add color and provide a youthful, “rosy-cheeked” appearance. In addition, women often submit to cosmetic surgery and other beauty practices (i.e., hair bleaching, and for ethnic minority women, skin lightening) to enhance the illusion of youth and beauty.

There is evidence that African-American women are under pressure to attain Caucasian standards of beauty. Caucasoid features such as a small nose, thin lips, and light-colored eyes are thought to be “good” features (Neal & Wilson, 1989). Although there is less information on satisfaction with facial features than other physical beauty characteristics (C. Hall, 1995), it is clear that facial features play an important role in overall appearance satisfaction. Additionally, Neal (1988; cited in Neal & Wilson, 1989) found that African-American men perceive African-American women who have Caucasoid features to be more attractive.

Perhaps more influential than facial features, or at least more widely debated, is the significance of African-American women’s hair. In the past, features of hair such as texture, length and style have made political and social statements. Historically, “good” hair has been long, straight hair, similar to that of Caucasian or light-skinned women (Buchanan, 1993; R. Hall, 1995; Neal & Wilson, 1989). Long, straight hair was idealized by women in the African-American community and garnered women a higher social status within the community (Green, et al., 2000). Kinky, nappy, short, African hair has been synonymous with “bad” hair (Buchanan, 1993) and viewed as characteristic of those with “dark” skin (R. Hall, 1995; Neal & Wilson, 1989). It is clear that the lines of “good” versus “bad” in the battle of physical attractiveness are well marked. There does not appear to be much room for debate regarding

what have historically been considered acceptable or unacceptable beauty standards. However, as with the extreme points on the skin color continuum, women whose hair texture and length are at either end of the spectrum seem to receive more intense reactions from others (Greene et al., 2000).

For African-American women, the “Mammy” image of dark skin and kinky hair may bring forth feelings of shame and unattractiveness (West, 1995). Women may be overwhelmed with the belief that their own features are unacceptable in current society; or that they have been labeled with certain characteristics because of the stereotype. Reactions to this stereotyped portrayal of the African-American female are so strong that topics associated with it (e.g., skin color, hair texture) are often issues in therapy with African-American women (West, 1995). Specifically, Greene et al. (2000) suggested that how a woman feels about her hair may be representative of how she feels about other aspects of herself. Style of hair sends a message to the African-American community. Historically, the idea has been that “good” hair was similar to Caucasian hair, and wearing the Caucasian style of hair symbolized the woman was “better” because she was closer to being Caucasian (C. Hall, 1995). However, this theory does not seem to be as popular in present society. C. Hall is quick to point out that African-American women may not have the desire to “emulate” Caucasian culture through a simple hairstyle.

Hair straightening has been viewed as an “adaptation to the reality of white supremacy” (Buchanan, 1993). Although the “Black is Beautiful” movement encouraged women to embrace their African hair and not follow the Caucasian standard of beauty (Neal & Wilson, 1989), products continued to be designed to alter the texture and style of African hair. Straighter hair is perceived to be more acceptable in a dominant Caucasian society. Beauty product manufacturers tap into the insecurities of African-American women and offer them opportunities to relax the

“kinkiness” of their natural hair (for review see Neal & Wilson, 1989). As with the presentation of products to alter skin color, products to alter hair texture may be damaging psychologically to African-American women (West, 1995). The products encourage women to alter their physical state to attain a standard of beauty that is nearly impossible. In addition, the products suggest to women that their current physical state is unacceptable and *should* be altered to fit the mainstream ideal.

### Methodological Biases in Research

Before beginning to assess how an individual thinks, feels, and responds to her own body, the manner in which body image is defined must be considered. Discrete aspects of the body that are assessed with each measure must be clearly identified. Without an accurate understanding of the aspects of the body involved in particular measures of body image, no definitive conclusions about how an individual feels about her body can be made. At this time, there is not an adequate, uniform definition for body image or body image dissatisfaction. In addition, without including multiple salient features in the assessment of body image, conclusions about an individual’s body image are incomplete. A complete body image assessment might include measures of weight, height, and shape satisfaction; as well as items to assess satisfaction with skin color, hair type, texture, color and satisfaction with facial features. Finally, numerous sociocultural factors influence body image. For example, in addition to physical factors related to appearance, level of acculturation, identification with one’s own ethnic group, geographic location, educational background, and socioeconomic status are but a few factors that should be examined in the assessment of body image.

### *Sample Biases*

A few distinct problems exist regarding sampling procedures used in research on body image. First, the lack of non-Caucasian samples in research on body image is well documented (Altabe, 1996; Davis & Yager, 1992; Dolan, 1992; Poran, 2002; Wildes et al., 2001). Second, body image is often studied as a correlate to eating disorders (Cash & Brown, 1987; Chandler et al., 1994; Lovejoy, 2001; Rosen 1996; Wildes et al., 2001), which have been studied primarily in Caucasian, college-aged women. Unfortunately, because body image dissatisfaction has often been thought to be a problem only for Caucasian women, ethnic minority women historically have not been included in body image research (Reid & Kelly, 1994; Rubin et al., 2003).

A separate problem involves the degree to which the African-American population involved in body image research is representative of the African-American population as a whole. Several factors are involved in identifying whether or not results from the sample population are generalizable to the general population. However, in most body image research, these factors are not considered or are not included in their entirety. Furthermore, African-Americans are often termed “black”, as are individuals of African descent from a variety of Caribbean and African nations. The umbrella term “black” typically does not consider the separate ethnic identities and influences within the African-American, “black”, ethnic group (Celio, Zabinski, & Wilfley, 2002).

Additionally, it is important to consider who is being sampled with regard to educational status. Because most research samples are comprised of college students, it must be ascertained whether the African-American female college student population is a representative sample of the general African-American female population. Further, college samples themselves differ in their representativeness. For example, students at a historically black college may have different

characteristics than students at a predominately white, private university or a state college or university. Finally, in non-college samples, it is important to identify level of completed education and occupation. Discrepancies in the current data may be due to lack of consideration of these characteristics.

While these issues are also present in Caucasian samples, they are often overlooked in African-American samples. For example, while researchers attempt to utilize more ethnically and culturally diverse samples, such research populations are often samples of convenience and may not be representative of the culture in its entirety (American Psychological Association (APA), 2002). Research that fails to consider the impact of culture and within-group differences (i.e., SES, education, nation of origin) may result in behavior being “misidentified” or “pathologized” (APA, 2002, p. 39).

The ethnic minority group an individual belongs to may play an important role in understanding her view of body image. However, the degree to which an ethnic minority group member identifies with her ethnic minority group and the degree of assimilation into the majority culture are also important issues to consider. According to Landrine and Klonoff (1996), highly acculturated individuals will not differ greatly in their attitudes and behaviors from the majority group. Interestingly, it has been reported that African women living in South Africa, although mostly indicating realistic views of their body shape and weight, also show signs of assimilating Western cultural values regarding body shape (Senekal, Steyn, Mashego, & Nel, 2001). The widespread influence of Western culture further suggests that identification with a particular cultural standard is an important factor to consider in the study of body image.

*Assessment Measures*

Regardless of ethnicity, limitations exist in understanding the concept of body image as a result of restricting the measure of body image to features associated with eating disorders. (Cash & Brown, 1987; Chandler et al., 1994; Lovejoy, 2001; Rosen, 1996; Wildes et al., 2001). Within the context of eating disorders, the salient features of body image disturbance are body shape and weight (DSM-IV-TR, 1999). Thus, measures that have been developed to identify eating disorders include components of body image mainly associated with weight loss, size and shape (for a review see Rosen, 1996; also see Eating Disorder Evaluation (EDE); Fairburn & Cooper, 1993; Eating Attitudes Test-26 (EAT-26), Garner & Garfinkel, 1979; Eating Disorder Inventory (EDI), Garner, Olmstead & Polivy, 1983).

The Figure Rating Scale (FRS; Stunkard, Sorenson, & Schulsinger, 1983) was originally developed for use in studies of obesity in twins. The measure requires individuals to select among a group of nine figures on a spectrum of underweight to overweight. The reliability and validity of the scale was examined using female and male undergraduate students (Thompson & Altabe, 1991). Information on ethnic group membership was not provided. Participants were presented with the FRS and asked to select six figures that best represented the following: (1) *ideal* figure, (2) the figure you *think* best represents you, (3) the figure that best represents how you *feel* most of the time, (4) the figure *most preferred* by men, (5) figure *most preferred* by women, and (6) the most attractive figure of the *opposite sex*.

Two-week test-retest reliability correlations on the six different ratings for males ( $N=34$ ;  $r=.55-.89$ ) and females ( $N=58$ ;  $r=.60-.92$ ) were found to be significant at the .001 level.

Validity analyses were conducted using discrepancy measures of subjective body dissatisfaction based on the figure ratings. The three discrepancy measures were (1) *feel* minus *ideal*, (2) *think*



minus *ideal*, (3) *feel* minus *think*. Correlations between the figure ratings and various measures of body dissatisfaction (EDI-Body Dissatisfaction subscale; Garner et al., 1983), eating disturbance (EDI-Bulimia and Drive for Thinness subscales; Garner et al., 1983) and self-esteem (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory; Rosenberg, 1965) were high and in the anticipated directions. The FRS was concluded to be an appropriate measure of body image disturbance and is used frequently in research on body image and eating disorders.

A recent review of eating disorder and body image assessment measures identified the absence of research examining the validity and reliability of measures with non-Caucasian populations (Kashubeck-West, Mintz, & Saunders, 2001). Although each measure reviewed is used on a regular basis with women in body image research, not one had been assessed for use with ethnic minority women. The lack of non-Caucasian samples used in research on body image disturbance has resulted in measures developed (Altabe, 1996; Parker et al., 1995) and validated (Davis & Yager, 1992; Thompson et al., 1999) for use with primarily Caucasian samples. According to Ofusu et al. (1998), established normative data on body image research for minority group members simply do not exist. While measures developed to identify eating disorders fail to adequately identify salient features of body image for Caucasian women, they also often fail to permit an understanding of important differences between Caucasian and African-American females (Parker et al., 1995).

### *Methodology*

Comparison studies (i.e., Caucasian vs. non-Caucasian) are typical in the examination of body image dissatisfaction, are widely reported in the literature and, unfortunately, are largely not useful (Dolan, 1991). Comparison studies often report deviance from the Caucasian norm group rather than describing normative behavior for the non-Caucasian group (Reid & Kelly,

1994). These studies ignore the impact of variables such as sociocultural influence and differences in salient physical features among the groups.

Rather than continuing the process of making straight comparisons between Caucasians and non-Caucasians, Altabe (1998) recommends the use of multiple (i.e., qualitative and quantitative) measures to provide greater reliability of findings. The use of qualitative and quantitative measures allows for identification of areas other than weight concern that might be salient for members of non-Caucasian ethnic groups. Finally, assessment of ethnic identification has been suggested (Altabe, 1996). This recommendation comes as a result of findings that African-American women who have a strong cultural identity are less likely to struggle with body image dissatisfaction (Abrams et al., 1993; Pumariega et al., 1994; Rubin et al., 2003).

#### Summary and Hypotheses

Current measurement techniques of body image are imprecise for ethnic and racial minority groups as they ignore many salient ethnic-specific physical characteristics. Thus far there has been little empirical research on body image among African-American women (Falconer & Neville, 2000). The research that has been conducted has been mostly comparative in nature (Falconer & Neville, 2000) and is inconsistent regarding the concern African-American and Caucasian women have with body image (Altabe, 1996).

It is evident that the African-American population is more tolerant of a wider variety of body sizes than is the Caucasian population. Furthermore, current research suggests that African-American women have a more positive view of their body image than Caucasian women do. Although African-American women may have less concern with altering their body size and shape to be smaller, other issues related to body image should be considered (e.g., facial features, hair, skin color). Thus far, research has focused on weight and body shape with little attention

paid to non-weight related appearance attributes that may be salient for non-Caucasian women (Altabe, 1998; Demarest & Allen, 2000; Fallon & Rozin, 1985; Freedman et al., 2004; Furnham & Baguna, 1994; Patel & Gray, 2001; Pumariega et al., 1994; Rubin et al., 2003; Senekal et al., 2001).

The goal of the current research project is to identify the most salient physical features of body image for African-American women. Caucasian women were included in the sample to strengthen the ability to discuss the need for potential changes in measurement strategy. 1a.) Consistent with the evidence presented in previous research suggesting physical features other than shape and weight as important to African-American women's body image (Altabe, 1998; Bond & Cash, 1992; Falconer & Neville, 2000; Green et al., 2000; C. Hall, 1995; R. Hall, 1995; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Okazawa-Rey et al., 1986; Rubin et al., 2003; West, 1995), it was hypothesized that African-American women would identify a lower "actual versus own ideal" and "actual versus cultural ideal" discrepancy, and more ethnic-specific physical features (i.e., skin color, hair texture and color, facial features outside the ethnic-specific range) than Caucasian women. 1b.) Specifically, due to the historical significance of skin color (Hill, 2002; Maddox & Gray, 2002; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Okazawa-Rey et al., 1986; Porter, 1991; Robinson & Ward, 1995), and previous research on body image and skin color (Bond & Cash, 1992; Falconer & Neville, 2000; Hill, 2002) skin color was predicted to be the most prevalent ethnic-specific feature reported by African-American women.

Racial identity influences an individual's reactions to psychosocial phenomena (Thompson, 1995) and provides a connection with other members of his or her ethnic group in society (Smith, 1989). Assimilation of the Western ideal among South African women, however, resulted in similar levels of body dissatisfaction as measured in Caucasian-American

women (Senekal et al., 2001). African-American women who indicate high identification with their ethnic culture are less likely to be negatively affected by comparisons to a Caucasian beauty ideal compared to African-American women who fail to embrace their ethnic identity (Makkar & Strube, 1995; Rubin et al., 2003). 2a) Based on previous research, it was hypothesized that physical racial identity, defined as a “sense of acceptance and comfort with the physical attributes of African-Americans” (p.159, Thompson Sanders, 2001), and racial identity salience would be negatively related to internalization of the thin ideal. 2b) Further, it was predicted that identification of ethnic specific features would be positively related to physical racial identity and racial identity salience, and negatively related to internalization of the thin ideal. 2c) Finally, given the impact of racial identity on how an individual perceives and responds to the environment (Thompson Sanders, 2001), it is predicted that internalization of the thin ideal will moderate the relationship between physical racial identity and number of ethnic specific features identified in body image, and racial identity salience and number of ethnic specific features identified in body image.

According to Singh (1993a; 1993b; 1994a) and Singh and Luis (1995) WHR will not vary by culture in its significance for predicting female physical attractiveness. Although African-American and Caucasian males and females tend to use similar standards when rating the attractiveness of female figures (Singh, 1994b), compared with Caucasian women, African-American females are more satisfied with a larger body weight (Abrams et al., 1993; Botta, 2000; Cash & Henry, 1995; Chandler et al., 1994; Kemper et al., 1993; Miller et al., 2000; Molly & Herzberger, 1998; Patel & Gray, 2001; Smith et al., 1999).

Therefore, 3a) it was predicted that the degree of internalization of the thin ideal would be unrelated to WHR, but positively related to the discrepancy between current versus ideal

weight selection. 3b) It was further hypothesized that internalization of the thin ideal would moderate the relationship between physical racial identity and ideal weight selection, and racial identity salience and ideal weight selection. 3c) With regard to research questioning the utility of the FRS with non-Caucasian samples (Altabe, 1996; Thompson et al., 1999), it was hypothesized that African-American women would report more concerns than Caucasian women related to WHR/FRS selections.

## Method

### *Participants*

The current sample included 119 African-American women and a comparison group of 39 Caucasian women. In an effort to provide insight into the uniqueness of skin color, hair texture, and other ethnic specific features, a small comparison group, comprised of European Americans, was used. However, comparisons are not the central focus of this study. Total sample size was 158. Participants were recruited via door-to-door visits to homes and businesses in a major Midwestern metropolitan area. A census tract map and 2000 census data related to income and percentage of African-Americans or Caucasians were used to select those census tracts that have predominantly African-American or Caucasian populations. Tracts were randomly selected from low, medium and upper level income areas; within the tracts, streets were randomly selected for researchers to visit. In residential areas, after five houses were visited on one street the researchers moved to the next selected street within the tract. During recruitment, eight Caucasian women and six African-American women refused participation. Although attempts to minimize bias were made, this procedure was not necessarily random or representative due to its dependence on who answered the door and agreed to respond to the survey.

Frequencies were computed for the two ethnic groups on a variety of characteristics. Frequencies for each group are featured in Table 1. Results revealed that the overall mean age for the African-American participants was 33 years, with a range of 18-76. For Caucasian participants, mean age was 38.5 years, with a range of 19-57. At a minimum, “some college” was completed by 79% of the African-American participants and 72% of the Caucasian participants. Within the entire sample, only three African-American participants did not complete high school. Among the African-American participants, 66% were single, divorced or widowed in contrast to 39% of the Caucasian participants. Average household income for both African-American and Caucasian participants was \$30,000 to \$40,000 with a range from \$0 to over \$70,000.

### *Subject Predictor Variables*

#### *Demographic information*

Participants were asked to provide information on their age, income level, education level, country of birth, self-identification within ethnic minority group (African-American only), and relationship status. Participants were asked to state their age in years, current relationship status (i.e., single, married, partnered, separated, divorced, widowed), indicate their nationality and country of birth, and select their level of completed education and household income from a variety of choices provided.

Table 1. *Demographic variables by ethnic group*

<b><u>Age</u></b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
African American	33.4	12.9
Caucasian	38.5	12.2

**Highest Education level (%)**

	<b>African-American</b>	<b>Caucasian</b>
Did not complete High School	2.5	0.0
Completed GED	0.8	0.0
High School graduate	15.1	17.9
Completed technical school	2.5	10.3
Completed some college	47.1	28.2
College graduate	22.7	17.9
Some post-graduate work	1.7	10.3
Graduate degree	7.6	15.4

**Marital Status (%)**

	<b>African-American</b>	<b>Caucasian</b>
Single	50.4	23.1
Partnered	8.4	10.3
Married	25.2	51.3
Separated	0.8	0.0
Divorced	13.4	15.4
Widowed	1.7	0.0

**Income (%)**

	<b>African-American</b>	<b>Caucasian</b>
0-10,000	21.0	0.0
10,000-20,000	16.0	23.1
20,000-30,000	16.8	20.5
30,000-40,000	17.6	2.6
40,000-50,000	9.2	2.6
50,000-60,000	5.9	10.3
60,000-70,000	5.0	5.1
Over \$70,000	6.7	28.2

*Sociocultural attitudes toward appearance*

The Sociocultural Attitudes Toward Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ) (Heinberg, Thompson, & Stormer, 1995) was administered to measure participant's internalization of socially approved standards of appearance, particularly the thin ideal. The SATAQ was developed with a sample of 516 undergraduate women for whom information on ethnic group membership was not provided. The SATAQ was shown to have moderate convergent validity

with a variety of body image and eating disorder measures (range for Internalization subscale = .36-.61, Awareness subscale range = .28-.44; Heinberg et al., 1995).

The measure is comprised of an eight-item Internalization subscale (Cronbach's  $\alpha=.88$ ) and a six-item Awareness subscale (Cronbach's  $\alpha=.71$ ) (Heinberg et al., 1995). Further evaluation of the SATAQ revealed alpha coefficients for the Internalization and Awareness subscales as follows: Caucasian American women (.87, .68); African-American women (.81, .57); Hispanic American women (.89, .57) (Cashel et al., 2003). Brandenburg (2003) found a significant negative correlation between the Internalization subscale and WHR selection ( $r = -.17$ ) and ideal weight ( $r = -.27$ ) among a sample of African-American and Hispanic women. Only the eight-item Internalization subscale has been demonstrated to exhibit sufficient reliability and validity with ethnic minority women (Cashel, et al. 2003, Brandenburg, 2003) thus, only the Internalization subscale was administered in the current study. Alpha coefficients for the current sample were as follows: African-American women (.83), Caucasian women (.84).

Participants responded to the eight statements on a 5-point Likert scale with extremes labeled *completely disagree* and *completely agree*. Sample items included, "Music videos that show thin women make me wish that I were thin," and "I tend to compare my body to people in magazines and on TV". The total score (range from 8 to 40) reflects the participant's internalization of current sociocultural standards of appearance.

#### *Racial Identity Salience*

For African-American participants, a 10-item scale was used to measure racial identity salience. The scale, comprised of "salience" and "centrality" subscales, is based on the Identity Salience Scale of White and Burke (1987). Participants responded to the statements on a 4-point



Likert scale with extremes labeled *very important* (3) and *not important* (0). A sample “salience” item asks, “How important is it that your friends view and accept you as Black/African-American”. A sample “centrality” items asks, “How important are race and racial identity to your sense of who you are”. Total score ranges from 0 to 30.

The salience items obtained an alpha coefficient of .91, .86, and .87 in previous studies (Thompson Sanders, 1999; 2003; personal communication, April 14, 2004, respectively), and were correlated with racial socialization and racial identity attitudes (Thompson Sanders, 1999). Two-week test re-test reliability for the salience items was .87 (V. Sanders Thompson, personal communication, April 14, 2004). The centrality items obtained an alpha coefficient of .80 with a two-week test-retest reliability of .80 (V. Sanders Thompson, personal communication, April 14, 2004). Alpha coefficients for the present sample were as follows: salience (.88), centrality (.85).

#### *Physical Racial Identity*

Physical racial identity is defined as a “sense of acceptance and comfort with the physical attributes of African Americans” (p. 159, Thompson Sanders, 2001). Physical racial identity was examined in the African-American participants using the 8-item subscale from the 29-item Multidimensional Racial Identification Scale-Revised (Thompson Sanders, 1991, 1995, 2001). Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses conducted utilizing data collected from a community sample of African-Americans 18 years of age or older from a variety of geographic regions provide evidence of the measure’s validity. The physical racial identification subscale obtained an alpha coefficient of .75 and .90 in previous studies. The alpha coefficient for the present sample was .87. Test-retest reliability obtained at three weeks using 27 participants was .89. (Thompson Sanders, 1995; 2001).

Participants responded to the 8 items on a 7-point Likert scale with extremes labeled *strongly agree* and *strongly disagree*. Responses of *strongly agree* were assigned a numerical value of 7 on positively worded items, and 1 on negatively worded items. Responses of *strongly disagree* were assigned a numerical value of 1 on positively worded items and 7 on negatively worded items. A high score indicates strong acceptance of physical attributes associated with the group. A low score indicates weak acceptance of African-American physical features.

### *Dependent Variables*

#### *Body Image*

Participants were presented with 12 female figures of varying WHRs and body weights/sizes and asked to respond to a series of questions: 1) which figure most closely approximates your current figure, 2) which figure most closely resembles your preferred (ideal) body size, and 3) which figure do you believe is most attractive to men. These questions have previously been used in conjunction with another body size rating scale (Figure Rating Scale (FRS); Sorenson, Stunkard & Schulsinger, 1980) in research exploring desirable body size (Fallon & Rozin, 1985; Rozin & Fallon, 1988).

The two measures were combined in previous research (Brandenburg, 2003) to assess the critical role of both WHR and body weight/size in judgments of physical attractiveness. Although there are no available reliability and validity data for the measure as constructed by Brandenburg, there is ample reliability and validity data on the individual measures with Caucasian male and female populations.

The WHR measure consists of 12 line drawings depicting four levels of WHR (.7, .8, .9, and 1.0) and three levels of weight (normal, under- and overweight). The figures were drawn to represent a woman 5 feet, 5 inches in height at a weight of 120 lbs. (normal), 90 lbs

(underweight), or 150 lbs. (overweight). All facial and bodily features were held constant in these figures except for WHR sizes.

The validity of the body weight categories was checked by asking male undergraduate students (age 18-22 years,  $n=72$ ) to identify figures they perceived to be normal, under- or overweight (Singh, 1993a). The order of presentation of the figures was randomized and each figure was assigned an identifying letter. Two separate random sequences of figure orders were used to control for effect of position. All figures were presented on a single 8.5 inch x 11 inch sheet of white paper to allow for examination of all 12 figures simultaneously. All but three participants assigned the same figures to the three body-weight categories as designated by the experimenter (Singh, 1993a).

Although this author was unable to locate specific information on the psychometric properties of the WHR measure as used by Singh (1993a; 1993c), there are validity data supporting WHR as a feature associated with physical attractiveness, health and reproductive value (Singh, 1993a). The WHR has been demonstrated to be a stable measure with high within-person reliability and significantly correlated with measures of abdominal fat ( $r=.61$ ) as measured by computed tomography scanning (Ashwell, Cole & Dixon, 1985; Despres, et al., 1991 as cited in Singh, 1993).

It should be noted that the design of this measure allows for an examination of WHR and body weight/size upon selections of ideal figure and figure believed to be most attractive to men. Main dependent variables included ideal WHR, ideal body weight/size, ideal WHR of the figure viewed as most attractive to men, and ideal body weight/size of the figure viewed as most attractive to men. Additionally, an indirect measure of the participant's body satisfaction was

obtained by examining the discrepancy between the ratings of current WHR and body weight and between ideal WHR and body weight.

*Physical Appearance Discrepancy Questionnaire*

The Physical Appearance Discrepancy Questionnaire (PADQ; Altabe, 1996) is a modification of a technique described by Strauman and Higgins (1987). This instrument provided information regarding physical traits salient to each ethnic group, as well as the degree of importance of each trait. First, participants were asked to list physical traits associated with their actual appearance, their ideal appearance, and their perception of physical features their cultural group idealizes. Second, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they believe they possess each attribute associated with their actual appearance (“importance value”; 1= slightly, 2= moderately, 3= a great deal, 4= extremely). For “own ideal” and “cultural ideal” traits, participants used the same scale to rate the importance of each trait.

A series of scoring rules (also adapted from Strauman and Higgins, 1987) allow for a comparison of the participants’ list of actual traits to desired (ideal) appearance traits. Scoring begins with a comparison of the actual-own ideal trait list. A minimum of four traits is required on the own ideal list to complete the comparison. The measure will yield two scores: 1) an actual-own ideal discrepancy score and 2) an actual-cultural ideal discrepancy score (Altabe, 1996). A higher discrepancy score indicates greater body image dissatisfaction. For the purposes of this study, a third discrepancy score was computed to compare own ideal-cultural ideal. The same scoring rules were used replacing the “actual” trait list with the “own ideal” trait list.

Scoring rules on the PADQ were modified from the original measure. A minimum of three responses (in contrast to the specified four responses) on either the actual, own ideal or

cultural ideal category was considered sufficient for coding. This alteration in scoring was initiated due to low response rate overall on the PADQ, and a low number of responses within each category. By reducing the required number of responses for each trait list more participants' data could be included in the analyses. Additionally, a coding rule that allowed a score for attributes listed in one category but not another was added. For example, according to the measure, scoring rules require that traits that were listed on the ideal list, but did not have a match on the actual list (i.e., ideal= brown hair; actual= no mention of hair) be given a score of "0" (no discrepancy). However, this author decided to score traits that fell into this category as "2" to account for the trait being mentioned as part of an "ideal". The revised coding system allows the participant to receive a score for such response discrepancies whereas the original coding system did not. It seemed more appropriate to account for these traits as part of the "ideal" participant's mentioned rather than assigning a score of "0" and ignoring qualities considered to be salient as part of a "body image ideal" to these women. Finally, a third discrepancy score (own ideal-cultural ideal) was included in the analyses.

Traits that were mentioned on both ideal and actual lists were coded according to the rules established by the measure's author and modified as described. Scoring rules accounted for the trait listed and the importance value listed. For example, if the ideal trait exactly matched the actual trait (same trait and identical importance value), the "Non-Discrepancy Rule" was used. Regardless of the trait or the importance value, this rule assigned a score of "-2" to the trait. If the same trait was listed on both the ideal and the actual list, but the importance value was different, the absolute value of the difference between the importance values was the assigned score for the trait (i.e., actual list= blue eyes, 4; ideal list= blue eyes, 2; score= "2"). Compound traits (i.e., long, brown hair) were coded as two separate traits (long hair, brown hair). For each

trait list, the sum of the scores for each trait is the discrepancy score. A more complete set of scoring rules can be found in the appendix.

### *Analysis of Thought Listing*

#### *Thought Listing Task*

After completion of the body image rating task, participants were asked to list all the thoughts and ideas they had while completing this specific task. Using a standardized thought listing form (DeMaio & Rothgeb, 1996; Forsyth & Lessler, 1991), participants were asked to list each thought or idea on a single line to allow for ease of coding. After participants listed all of their thoughts or ideas they were asked to rate each thought or idea as positive, negative or neutral.

Previous concern related to the relevance of the FRS for non-Caucasian women has been raised (Altabe, 1996; Thompson et al., 1999). Although there are allusions to the inappropriateness of the task for ethnic minority women, thus far there are no empirical data related to reactions to this measure. This thought listing task allows the researcher to understand better participants' reactions to the body image figure presentation. Ultimately, the results of this task may provide evidence related to the utility of the FRS with non-Caucasian women.

The primary researcher independently coded the content of each thought. A research assistant, not involved with data collection, also coded twenty African-American participants' responses (N=43 responses; 18%). Inter-rater reliability was 88%. Consensus of 100% was reached following discussion of discrepant scores. Thoughts were coded to quantify whether the thought reflected: 1) task-related comments of emotion (i.e., anger, frustration, difficulty of task), 2) critique general to the overall questionnaire, 3) specific critique of WHR (i.e., "figures don't look like me", "figures all look the same"), 4) personal body image emotions (i.e., worry,

depressed), 5) positive/neutral thoughts (i.e., “I’m not going to change”), 6) negative thoughts (i.e., “I’m sexier when I’m thin”), 7) frustration/anger directed toward society, media (i.e., “Too much focus on body image”), 8) body image comments related to physical health, and 9) body image comments related to ethnicity/identity.

Thoughts were collapsed into four categories for analysis: (1) task related comments (i.e., emotional response to task, overall critique of task), (2) specific critique of WHR/FRS task, (3) personal body image thoughts (i.e., emotional reaction, positive or negative thoughts, response directed toward media), or (4) comments related to physical health or racial identity/ethnicity.

### *Procedure*

Participant recruitment took place from May to July, 2004. Participants received a recruitment statement and oral description of the research that described the study as an exploration of aspects of body image important to their ethnic group (e.g., African-American or Caucasian). Consent to participate was indicated by questionnaires completion. Participants were asked to complete paper and pencil questionnaires assessing demographic variables as well as the four measures assessing: sociocultural attitudes toward appearance, physical appearance discrepancy, racial identity salience (African-American only), physical racial identity (African-American only) and body size and shape. Participants received instructions for completing the questionnaires from the examiner or an undergraduate research assistant, who responded to any questions or concerns at the time of administration. Measures were completed at participants’ homes, in one session, requiring 15-20 minutes. Participants received no remuneration for completing survey measures.

## Results

### *Description of African-American and Caucasian Sample*

Descriptive statistics (refer to Table 2) revealed that the African-American sample was slightly younger, and internalized the thin ideal less, than the Caucasian sample. The average age of African-American participants was 33 years compared to Caucasian participants' average age of 38.5 years. A wider range of ages was represented in the African-American sample compared to the Caucasian sample and only one quarter of the African-American participants were married compared to over half of the Caucasian participants. Although African-American participants were more likely to have attended at least some college, Caucasian participants were more likely to have pursued graduate work if they had attended college.

The Caucasian participants scored significantly higher on the Internalization scale of the SATAQ than did African-Americans ( $t(154) = -4.84, p < .0005$ ). Higher scores indicate greater identification with, and acceptance of, Western cultural standards, particularly the thin body ideal. Finally, the African-American sample indicated that ethnic identity was of moderate importance, and endorsed a high degree of acceptance of physical features associated with their ethnic group.



Table 2. Descriptive statistics for subject predictor variables

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Skewness</b>	<b>Kurtosis</b>	<b>Alpha level</b>
<b>Age</b>						
African-American	33.36	18-76	12.93	0.98	0.72	N/A
Caucasian	38.50	19-57	12.16	-0.08	-1.50	
<b>SATAQ (Internalization)</b>						
African-American	17.05	8-40	6.62	1.05	1.25	.83
Caucasian	23.03		6.94	-.33	-0.25	.84
<b>Racial Identity Salience</b>	18.41	0-30	7.00	-0.46	0.14	.89
<b>Physical Racial Identity</b>	49.59	26-56	6.61	-1.11	0.81	.87

*Physical features associated with Body Image*

*Ethnic Specific Features vs. Traditional Body Image Features*

Frequency data were computed for both African-American and Caucasian participants' reports of salient physical attributes on the PADQ. Responses were coded into categories representing either ethnic specific features (ESF) or traditional body image features.

Participants' responses were coded for each of the three response categories: Actual, Own Ideal, and Cultural Ideal. See Appendix B, Table B1 for a listing of all physical attribute responses listed by African-American participants.

Ethnic specific features were selected based on features described in current literature as salient to African-American women. Features noted to be salient to African-American women include: skin color (Altabe, 1998; Bond & Cash, 1992; Falconer & Neville, 2000; C. Hall, 1995; R. Hall, 1995; Hill, 2002; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Okazawa-Rey, Robinson & Ward, 1986; West, 1995), hair texture, length and style (Green, White & Whitten, 2000; C. Hall, 1995; R. Hall, 1995; Miller et al., 2000; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Okazawa-Rey et al., 1986), and facial features (C. Hall, 1995; R. Hall, 1995; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Smith et al., 1991; Zebrowitz, 1997).

To represent the data best, categories signifying "traditional" body image features were also included. These features were selected based on previous data in the body image literature.

Traditional body image features include: height, weight, breast size, waist/stomach size, legs, and fitness/tone. Although these features were not included in final analyses, a complete listing can be found in Appendix B, Table B2.

It is important to note the qualitative differences in the types of responses reported by members of each ethnic group for the categories of hair and skin color. For example, African-American women provided more hair texture comments (long, curly, straight, natural) than Caucasian women. Additionally, skin color responses from African-American women often described specific color qualities (i.e., “coffee with cream”, dark brown, honey brown, caramel, copper, light-skinned) whereas skin color responses from Caucasian women typically referenced being “tan”. See Table 3 for responses recorded in each ethnic specific feature category (hair, skin color, facial features), and within each response level (Actual, Own Ideal, Cultural Ideal).

Table 3. *Ethnic Specific Features as listed on PADQ measure*

	<b>Hair</b>	<b>Skin color</b>	<b>Facial Features</b>	<b>Eye Color</b>
<b>Actual*</b>				
African-American	53.1%	51.4%	39.6%	17.1%
Caucasian	50.0%	13.0%	31.6%	15.8%
<b>Own Ideal**</b>				
African-American	38.8%	22.3%	18.5%	9.7%
Caucasian	31.6%	7.9%	13.1%	2.6%
<b>Cultural Ideal***</b>				
African-American	65.3%	46.9%	25.5%	17.3%
Caucasian	43.6%	35.9%	23.1%	5.1%

For African-American sample, \* N=111; \*\* N=103; \*\*\* N=98

*Ethnic Specific Features: Actual, Own Ideal and Cultural Ideal*

A between groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed with ethnic group as the independent variable and number of ESF listed as actual attributes, own ideal, and cultural ideal on the PADQ as dependent variables. Wilks’ lambda= .94,  $F(3, 128)=2.63$ ,  $p=.05$  was significant. To examine one aspect of hypothesis 1a, univariate analyses were completed with significant differences found for actual number of ethnic specific features

reported  $F(1, 131) = 7.16, p = .01, \eta^2 = .05$ . African-American women reported significantly more ESF as actual traits than did Caucasian women ( $M = 2.07, SD = 1.50; M = 1.32, SD = 1.40$ , respectively). No significant differences were found for number of ESF reported as own ideal  $F(1, 131) = 1.12, p = .29, \eta^2 = .01$ , or cultural ideal traits  $F(1, 131) = 1.89, p = .17, \eta^2 = .01$ . Results indicate that ethnic group is a significant predictor of the number of ethnic specific features the individual reported as “actual” features.

Contrary to hypothesis 1b, skin color was not the most prevalent ethnic-specific feature reported by this sample of African-American women. Hair traits were most often reported on each list (actual and ideal), followed by skin color, facial features, and eye color. A Wilcoxon T-test for related samples was completed. Results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the number of hair and skin color responses for African-American participants on the actual, own ideal, and cultural ideal list. Respectively,  $z(111) = -4.38, p < .01$ ,  $z(103) = -2.91, p < .01$ ,  $z(98) = -3.34, p < .01$ . Included in “hair” responses were traits related to texture, style, color and length. Curiously, seven African-American participants listed “White” as an attribute describing the cultural ideal. Six more African-American respondents reported traditionally Caucasian physical attributes (blue eyes, blond hair) as part of the cultural ideal. Although the number of these responses was small (10% of the sample), it is interesting to note that traditionally Caucasian attributes are associated with the cultural ideal for some African-American women.

*Physical Attribute Discrepancies: Actual, Own Ideal and Cultural Ideal*

Responses on the PADQ also provided information regarding discrepancies in the participant’s actual self, own ideal, and cultural ideal. A total of seven African-American participants declined to answer any section of the PADQ, 16 participants declined to respond to

one or both ideal categories, and nine participants' responses on one or more of the categories were not codeable (i.e., listed personality traits or a celebrity). One Caucasian participant listed a celebrity as her own ideal, otherwise all responses were included in the analyses. A between groups MANOVA was performed with ethnic group as the independent variable and actual-own ideal discrepancy, actual-cultural ideal discrepancy, and own ideal-cultural ideal discrepancy on the PADQ as dependent variables. A Wilks' lambda = .84,  $F(3, 63) = 3.99$ ,  $p = .01$  was significant.

To complete tests of hypothesis 1a, univariate analyses were completed with significant differences found for actual-own ideal discrepancy,  $F(1, 66) = 11.08$ ,  $p < .0005$ , eta squared = .15. African-American women had significantly lower discrepancies between their actual traits and their own ideal traits than did Caucasian women ( $M = 5.45$ ,  $SD = 10.08$ ;  $M = 13.00$ ;  $SD = 5.52$ , respectively). No significant differences were found for discrepancies between actual traits and cultural ideal traits  $F(1, 66) = 1.40$ ,  $p = .24$ , eta squared = .02, or between own ideal and cultural ideal traits  $F(1, 66) = 1.40$ ,  $p = .24$ , eta squared = .02. Results indicate that ethnic group is a significant predictor of the discrepancy between number of ethnic specific features noted in actual body image descriptions salient to women and the individual's ideal body image description.

### *Racial Identity and Body Image*

The tests of hypotheses 2a, b, and c included computation of correlations and regression analyses. Correlations were computed to facilitate examination of the relationships among racial identity salience, physical racial identity, and internalization of the thin ideal (see Table 4). For African-American women, results indicate that increased acceptance of a range of physical features associated with African ancestry is associated with less acceptance of features associated

with the Western, thin ideal. Additionally, the higher African-American women rated the importance of ethnic identity, the more likely they were to list ethnic specific features as essential to the cultural ideal.

Table 4. *Dependent Variable Correlations for African-American Sample*

	SATAQ (Internalization)	Racial Identity Salience	Physical Racial Identity
Racial Identity Salience	-.02	--	--
Physical Racial Identity	-.40**	.06	--
Ethnic Specific Features: Actual	-.15	.10	-.05
Ethnic Specific Features: Own Ideal	-.04	-.04	-.04
Ethnic Specific Features: Cultural Ideal	.01	.26*	.10
Ethnic Specific Features: Sum total	-.09	.142	-.02

\* $p=.05$ ; \*\* $p=.01$

To test hypothesis 2b, a four-step hierarchical regression analysis was completed to identify the predictive ability of internalization of the thin ideal, racial identity salience, and physical racial identity upon number of ESF reported (actual, own ideal, cultural ideal, total ESF). See Table 5. Racial identity salience contributed significantly to the prediction of number of cultural ideal ESF reported  $F(1,92) = 5.74, p=.02$ , accounting for approximately 4.8% of the variance, Adjusted  $R^2 = .048$  and  $B=.24$ . Salience of race to self-identity was predictive of more reported ESF as part of the cultural ideal. The addition of internalization of the thin ideal and physical racial identity to the equation did not result in a significant  $F^{\text{change}}$  statistic.  $F(2,91)=.01, p=.94$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .04$  and  $B= -.008$ , and  $F(3,90) = .75, p=.39$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .04$  and  $B=.10$ , respectively. Physical racial identity, internalization of the thin ideal, and racial identity salience were not associated with actual ( $F(1,105)=.12, p=.73$ ;  $F(2,104)=3.15, p=.08$ ;  $F(3,103)=1.28, p=.26$ , respectively), own ideal ( $F(1,97)=.22, p=.64$ ;  $F(2,96)=.19, p=.67$ ;  $F$

(3,95)=.03, p=.86, respectively), or total ESF ( $F(1,88)=.03$ ,  $p=.86$ ;  $F(2,87)=.83$ ,  $p=.36$ ;  $F(3,86)=2.04$ ,  $p=.16$ , respectively) reported.

Table 5. *Prediction of actual, own ideal, cultural ideal and total ESF reported.*

Predictor Variable	Beta	SE Beta	Std Beta	Dependent Variable
Racial identity salience, Physical racial identity, Internalization	.02	.02	.11	ESF actual
Racial identity salience, Physical racial identity, Internalization	-.003	.02	-.02	ESF own ideal
Racial identity salience*	.05	.02	.24	ESF cultural ideal
+ Physical racial identity	-.002	.02	-.008	
+ Phys. racial identity & Intern.	.02	.03	.098	
Racial identity salience, Physical racial identity, Internalization	.07	.05	.15	ESF total

\*  $p < .05$ .

In order to test the hypothesis of moderation, multiple regression analyses were computed to identify the presence of interaction effects between internalization of the thin ideal and physical racial identity, and internalization of the thin ideal and racial identity salience in the prediction of total ESF. In accordance with Baron and Kenny (1986) and Holmbeck (1997), predictor and moderator main effects were entered into the equation (e.g., physical racial identity, racial identity salience, internalization) followed by the interaction effect (physical racial identity \* internalization, racial identity salience \* internalization). Racial identity salience, physical racial identity, internalization of the thin ideal, and their interactive effects were not predictive of total ESF for this sample.

### *Body Satisfaction*

#### *Perceived Current and Ideal Weight and WHR*

Frequency data were calculated for participants' perceived current weight and their ideal weight. As shown in Table 6, the largest number of both African-American and Caucasian women indicated their perceived current weight status as Overweight, while their ideal weight was in the Normal range. It is noteworthy, however, that approximately 20% of the African-

American respondents, compared to 2.6% of the Caucasian respondents, selected an Overweight figure as the ideal. These data support previous findings that African-American women are more accepting of greater body weight (Abrams et al., 1993; Botta, 2000; Cash & Henry, 1995; Chandler et al., 1994; Kemper et al., 1993; Miller et al., 2000; Molly & Herzberger, 1998; Patel & Gray, 2001; Smith et al., 1999) than are Caucasian women. In contrast, approximately one-third of the Caucasian respondents, compared to 10.7% of African-Americans, selected an Underweight figure as their ideal, suggesting greater acceptance of the thin ideal among Caucasians.

Table 6. *Perceived Current and Ideal Weight Selection*

<b>Estimate of Weight</b>	<b>Perceived Current Weight Status*</b>	<b>Ideal Weight**</b>
Under Weight		
African-American	13.0%	10.7%
Caucasian	10.3%	33.3%
Normal Weight		
African-American	25.0%	68.9%
Caucasian	41.0%	64.1%
Over Weight		
African-American	62.0%	20.4%
Caucasian	48.7%	2.6%

\* N=108; \*\*N= 103 for African-American sample.  
 N= 39 for Caucasian sample

Frequency data were also calculated for participants' perceived current WHR and their ideal WHR. See Table 7 for a complete list of values. A smaller WHR is indicative of a more curvaceous, "feminine" figure. The largest percentage of African-American and Caucasian participants selected the smallest ratio (.7) as their perceived current and ideal WHR status. Conversely, the second-largest group of Caucasian participants selected the largest ratio (1.0) as their perceived current WHR status. The largest ratio was the least frequently selected ideal WHR for both African-American and Caucasian participants.

Table 7. *Perceived Current and Ideal WHR Selection*

<b>Waist-to-Hip Ratio (WHR)</b>		<b>Perceived Current WHR Status*</b>	<b>Ideal WHR**</b>
.7	African-American	40.4%	56.7%
	Caucasian	33.3%	46.2%
.8	African-American	30.3%	25.0%
	Caucasian	20.5%	25.6%
.9	African-American	15.6%	9.6%
	Caucasian	17.9%	20.5%
1.0	African-American	13.8%	8.7%
	Caucasian	28.2%	7.7%

\* N= 109; \*\* N= 104 for African-American sample  
 N= 39 for Caucasian sample

Discrepancy scores were calculated from perceived current weight and WHR and ideal weight and WHR (see Table 8). A negative discrepancy score indicates a preference for a smaller waist-to-hip ratio or weight, while a positive discrepancy score indicates a preference for a larger waist-to-hip ratio or weight. The largest percentage of both African-American and Caucasian participants preferred a smaller weight than their current perceived weight. For both groups, the largest percentage of respondents identified their perceived current WHR as their ideal WHR (no discrepancy).

Table 8. *WHR and Weight Discrepancies*

<b>Discrepancy Value</b>		<b>Weight *</b>	<b>WHR</b>
-3	African-American	N/A	6.7%
	Caucasian		12.8%
-2	African-American	1.0%	10.6%
	Caucasian	2.6%	10.3%
-1	African-American	46.6%	18.3%
	Caucasian	64.1%	20.5%
0	African-American	45.6%	44.2%
	Caucasian	33.3%	35.9%
1	African-American	4.9%	11.5%
	Caucasian	0.0%	15.4%
2	African-American	1.9%	6.7%
	Caucasian	0.0%	2.6%
3	African-American	N/A	1.9%
	Caucasian		2.6%

\* Discrepancy values for weight range from -2 to 2.



*Internalization of the Thin Ideal and Perceived Current and Ideal Weight and WHR*

To test hypothesis 3a, correlations were computed to facilitate examination of the relationships among current perceived weight and WHR, ideal weight and WHR, discrepancies between perceived current and ideal weight and WHR, and internalization of the thin ideal (see Table 9). Internalization of the thin ideal was not significantly related to perceived current or ideal WHR or weight for African-American participants. For Caucasian participants, a significant negative correlation was obtained ( $r=-.31$ ), indicating that stronger acceptance of the thin ideal was associated with a smaller perceived current weight. As hypothesized, internalization of the thin ideal was not related to perceived current WHR, ideal WHR, or WHR discrepancy for either ethnic group. Hypotheses predicting a significant positive relationship between internalization of the thin ideal and weight discrepancy were not supported for either ethnic group.

Table 9. *Relationship of Internalization of the Thin Ideal, Perceived Current Weight/WHR and Ideal Weight/WHR.*

	Internalization of the thin ideal African-American	Internalization of the thin ideal Caucasian
Perceived current weight	.15	-.31*
Perceived current WHR	.03	-.06
Ideal weight	-.03	-.26
Ideal WHR	-.07	.05
Weight Discrepancy	-.18	.13
WHR discrepancy	-.09	.09

\*  $p < .06$

To examine further the relationships among ethnicity, internalization of the thin ideal, and weight and WHR discrepancy, two stepwise multiple regression analyses were completed with ethnicity and internalization of the thin ideal as predictor variables and weight discrepancy and WHR discrepancy as the dependent variables. See Table 10. Ethnic group contributed significantly to the prediction of weight discrepancy  $F(1,138) = 5.43$ ,  $p=.02$ , accounting for

approximately 3% of the variance, Adjusted  $R^2 = .03$  and  $B = -.20$ . Data suggest that European American women reported greater discrepancy between current perceived weight and own ideal weight. The addition of internalization of the thin ideal to the equation did not result in a significant  $F^{\text{change}}$  statistic,  $F(1, 137) = 1.60$ ,  $p = .21$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .04$  and  $B = -.11$ . Ethnicity and internalization of the thin ideal were not associated with WHR discrepancy scores in this sample,  $F(2, 138) = .54$ ,  $p = .59$ .

Table 10. *Prediction of Weight and WHR Discrepancy*

Predictor Variable	Beta	SE Beta	Std Beta	Dependent Variable
Ethnicity*	-.29	.12	-.20	Weight Discrepancy
Ethnicity, Internalization	-.01	.01	-.11	Weight Discrepancy
Ethnicity	-.29	.25	-.08	WHR Discrepancy
Ethnicity, Internalization	-.01	.02	-.04	WHR Discrepancy

\* Significant finding

*Racial Identity, Internalization of the Thin Ideal, and Weight Discrepancy*

Moderator effects of internalization of the thin ideal on the relationship between racial identity salience and actual-ideal weight discrepancy, and physical racial identity and actual-ideal weight discrepancy were tested. To test for moderation, multiple regression analyses were computed to identify the presence of interaction effects between internalization of the thin ideal, physical racial identity and racial identity salience in the prediction of actual-ideal weight discrepancy (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Holmbeck, 1997). Predictor and moderator main effects were entered into the equation (e.g., physical racial identity, racial identity salience, internalization) followed by the interaction effect (physical racial identity \* internalization, racial identity salience \* internalization). Predictor and moderator variables were centered prior to testing for significant interaction effects. A significant interaction between physical racial identity and internalization of the thin ideal was found ( $F(1, 95) = 3.73$ ,  $p < .06$ ). This is

suggestive of moderation, therefore further analyses were completed to provide more evidence of this relationship.

The data were divided into high and low internalization of the thin ideal using a median split. Scores on internalization of the thin ideal of 16 or less were considered “low” internalization, and scores of 17 or more were considered “high” internalization. Weight discrepancy was regressed on physical racial identity for participants in the low and high internalization categories. Further analyses did not support internalization of the thin ideal (hi or low) as a moderator between physical racial identity and weight discrepancy.

#### *Thought Listing Task*

Content of the Thought Listing Task was analyzed for both ethnic groups and can be viewed in Appendix B, Table B5. The greatest percentage of African-American responses mentioned a critique of the FRS/WHR task (35%) whereas the greatest percentage of Caucasian responses mentioned negative personal body image thoughts (35%). The next largest percentage of responses from both African-American and Caucasian respondents was in the positive or neutral body image thoughts category (17% and 24%, respectively). None of the Caucasian responses consisted of concerns related to ethnicity or identity as a Caucasian woman, in comparison to the 9% of African-American responses in this category.

For analyses, the nine response categories were collapsed into four variables (e.g., task related comments, specific critique of the WHR/FRS task, personal body image thoughts, and thoughts related to physical health or ethnic identity). To reduce skewness in the collapsed variables, a square root transformation (Tabachnik & Fidell, 1993) was performed. To identify differences in responses on the thought listing task, a between groups MANOVA was conducted with ethnic group as the independent variable and the four collapsed response categories as

dependent variables. Wilks' lambda= .69,  $F(4, 134) = 15.30$ ,  $p < .0005$  was significant. To examine the hypotheses, univariate analyses were completed with significant differences found for WHR/FRS critique,  $F(1, 138) = 4.63$ ,  $p = .03$ , eta squared= .03; and personal body image thoughts  $F(1, 138) = 59.18$ ,  $p < .0005$ , eta-squared=.30.

As predicted, African-American respondents listed significantly more concerns related to the WHR/FRS task than Caucasian participants. Over one-third of the African-American responses (35%) included a complaint or critique specific to the WHR/FRS task compared to 10% of the Caucasian responses. Due to the high volume of African-American responses in the WHR/FRS critique category, and since the task was designed to identify specific critique of the WHR/FRS measure, separate WHR/FRS critique categories were developed to describe the data best. Appendix B, Table B5 lists the categories and percentage of responses for both ethnic groups. Twenty-eight percent of the African-American responses and 29% of the Caucasian responses commented that the figures "don't look like me". Further, critique from African-American women included comments related to the figures not being representative of African-American women (19%) and that the figures "look like White women" (13%).

Although no direct prediction was made with regard to personal body image thoughts, upon closer examination of the response categories, it is not surprising that Caucasian women reported significantly more personal body image thoughts ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 2.16$ ) than African-American women did ( $M = 1.06$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ). Results indicate that 35% of Caucasian responses were categorized as "negative" body image thoughts (i.e., desire for thinness, weight loss) while 24% were considered "positive" or "neutral" body image thoughts, in contrast to 10% and 17%, respectively, of the African-American responses.

## Discussion

Overall, results of the present study provide valuable insight into the physical characteristics salient to African-American women. The present findings illuminate striking differences between the physical characteristics salient to African-American and Caucasian women, but also highlight their similarities. Verbal and written feedback from participants with respect to the measures used in the present study evidenced important areas that require alteration in the study of body image. Limitations to the current study and suggestions for future research on the examination of body image among women of varying ethnic groups will be presented.

### *Hypothesis 1*

Hypothesis 1a predicted that African-American women would identify smaller discrepancies between their actual-own ideal and actual-cultural ideal attributes, and more ESF than Caucasian women. Results indicate that African-American women reported less discrepancy between their actual and own ideal physical attributes, and more ESF as actual attributes, than Caucasian women. There was no significant difference in the number of ESF reported as ideal attributes, or in the discrepancy between actual attributes and the cultural ideal for the two groups. Interestingly, both groups reported large discrepancies between their actual and cultural ideal attributes, indicating that the cultural ideal is highly dissimilar from their current physical attributes. It may be that both groups of women hold themselves to an unattainable cultural ideal, regardless of possible differences in their perception of the cultural ideal.

The small actual-own ideal discrepancy for the African-American women indicates that these women have may accepted their own traits as their ideal. However, because affect

surrounding the discrepancies and importance of the discrepancies was not measured, true reactions cannot be assessed. It may be that the list of attributes they already possess *is* their personal ideal, or the concept of an ideal may be irrelevant to these women. Although these women appear to be satisfied with the actual traits they possess, they may be as yet unable to integrate the physical attributes typical for their ethnic group into the Westernized cultural ideal. It appears that the attributes reported by the African-American women on their own ideal list were different from the attributes reported on their cultural ideal list, but not different from attributes on their actual list. This would account for the smaller discrepancy between actual and own ideal, but higher discrepancy between actual-cultural ideal, and own ideal-cultural ideal. Further, these women may have a larger discrepancy between their actual traits and the cultural ideal if the cultural ideal is perceived to be comprised of Caucasian traits, and thus unattainable, or as possessing unattainable African traits. It will be important to gain an understanding of the cultural referent group in future research studies.

Data indicate that fewer ESF were reported in the cultural ideal, which suggests a perception that the cultural ideal is comprised of more global physical attributes (i.e., weight, breast size, height) than ethnic-specific attributes. Additionally, it is possible that the women were including their perception of what African-American men prefer, which may include global physical attributes, or the historically favorable Caucasoid attributes (Bond & Cash, 1992; Buchanan, 1993; Coard et al., 2001; R. Hall, 1995; Hill, 2002; Neal, 1988 cited in Neal & Wilson, 1989; see Neal & Wilson, 1989 for a review). Number of ESF may have been underestimated given that body shape characteristics were not included as ESF characteristics. In future studies it may be important to gain a better understanding of the importance of differences in body shape based on ethnic group and include these characteristics as ESF.

Hypothesis 1b, which predicted that skin color would be the most prevalent ESF reported by the African-American sample, was not supported. Characteristics associated with hair (length, texture, style) were reported to a significantly greater degree than other ESF (i.e., skin color, facial features, eye color) for African-American women. The higher number of hair attribute responses in comparison to other categories can be attributed to the types of responses included in each category. For example, responses included in the skin and eye color categories were limited to one characteristic, color, whereas responses included in the hair and facial features categories included multiple characteristics, thus allowing for more responses. The wide range of descriptive attributes reported within the skin color (i.e., variations in color) and hair (i.e., texture, length, style, color) categories are indicative of the salience of these characteristics to overall body image, particularly for ethnic minority women. These results are consistent with prior research that suggests the importance of including physical attributes such as skin color, hair, and facial features in the assessment of body image among ethnic minority women. (Bond & Cash, 1992; C. Hall, 1995; R. Hall, 1995; Hill, 2002; Miller et al., 2000; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Smith et al., 1991; Zebrowitz, 1997).

### *Hypothesis 2*

As predicted in hypothesis 2a, internalization of the thin ideal was negatively related to identification with traditional African physical attributes. The more highly these African-American women identified with physical features traditionally associated with African ancestry, the less likely they were to identify with the Western, thin ideal. These results suggest that there are important differences in physical features associated with African ancestry and the Western ideal. Degree of internalization of the thin ideal was not related to the salience of race in African-American self-identity.

Hypothesis 2b predicted a positive relationship between the number of ESF reported and physical racial identity, and the number of ESF reported and racial identity salience. A negative relationship between the number of ESF reported and internalization of the thin ideal was predicted. Salience of race in African-American self-identity was predictive of the number of ESF African-American women identified as relevant to the cultural ideal. It is surprising, however, that no relationship was found between African-American self-identity and the ESF reported as either actual traits or own ideal. It may be that salience of race in African-American self-identity impacts the individual's perception of what is ideal in the culture more so than their own ideal. That is, the individual is more focused on African-American traits representing the cultural ideal even if their own ideal does not include traditional African-American traits. Alternatively, it may be the case that the ESF reported as the cultural ideal are not necessarily African-American ESF traits. For example, thirteen respondents indicated traditionally Caucasoid ESF (i.e., light skin, blond hair) as the cultural ideal, although these traits were dissimilar from their actual or own ideal traits. This would explain the large discrepancy found between actual-cultural ideal and own ideal-cultural ideal traits discussed previously.

Acceptance of traditionally African physical attributes and degree of internalization of the thin ideal were not predictive of the number of ESF reported. Additionally, the moderator effects of internalization of the thin ideal on the relationship of African-American racial identity and ESF, and racial identity salience and ESF were not supported. Several factors may account for these results. It is possible that respondents who reported a low association with the Caucasian beauty ideal may have declined to answer the PADQ out of frustration with the task. Thus, their responses would not have been included in final correlation analyses. Further, it may be the case that, for the participants in this study, African-American self-identity, rather than



identification with physical attributes representative of African ancestry, is more salient when making a comparison to physical attributes associated with the Western ideal. Salience of race in African-American self-acceptance, as opposed to acceptance of physical attributes associated with African ancestry, may be more influential to body image and identification with the Westernized physical ideal among this sample. Given these results, however, it seems relevant to assess degree of identification with the dominant culture and multiple aspects (salience of ethnic identity, physical features) of identification with the individual's ethnicity when examining body image among women from varying ethnic groups.

### *Hypothesis 3*

Hypothesis 3a predicted that internalization of the thin ideal would be positively related to the discrepancy between perceived current and ideal weight selection, but unrelated to WHR. Findings indicate that these African-American women have less of a discrepancy between their perceived current and ideal weight in comparison to the Caucasian sample. However, association with the Westernized, thin ideal was not related to WHR, or to the discrepancy between perceived current and ideal weight. These findings are consistent with prior research findings that WHR should not vary by ethnicity in its relationship to attractiveness (Singh 1993a; 1993b; 1994a; Singh & Luis, 1995), and that weight preferences do differ based on ethnicity (Abrams et al., 1993; Botta, 2000; Cash & Henry, 1995; Chandler et al., 1994; Kemper et al., 1993; Miller et al., 2000; Molloy & Hertzberger, 1998; Patel & Gray, 2001; Smith et al., 1999).

Findings related to selection of perceived current and ideal weight and WHR were generally consistent with previous research examining weight and WHR preferences among African-American and Caucasian women. Interesting differences were noted in the selection of ideal weight; African-American respondents were more likely than Caucasian participants to

select an overweight figure, while Caucasian respondents were more likely than African-American respondents to select an underweight figure. These findings support previous research that indicates African-American women have less concern with being overweight than Caucasian women (Cash & Henry, 1995; Kumanyika et al., 1993; White, et al., 2003). Overall, however, the majority of participants in each group selected a normal weight figure as their ideal. These findings, in connection with the finding that the majority of African-American respondents' selected normal weight ideal figures, seem to support previous research that normal weight figures with a low WHR are judged most attractive by African-American males and females (Singh, 1994b; Singh & Luis, 1995).

Hypothesis 3b predicted that internalization of the thin ideal would moderate the relationship between physical racial identity and ideal weight selection, and the relationship between racial identity salience and ideal weight selection. Although a significant interaction between physical racial identity and internalization of the thin ideal was found, further analyses did not support the hypothesized moderation effect.

As predicted, African-American respondents reported more concerns with the figures used in the WHR/FRS task than Caucasian women. Interestingly, 15% of the African-American participants refused to respond on the WHR/FRS task, and of those who responded, 28% expressed difficulty identifying with the figures used in the WHR/FRS task. The most common response was that the figures did not adequately represent the sizes and physical characteristics of women of color. Various comments describing the lack of variability in the figures (i.e., "Not enough different body types"), the Caucasoid appearance of the figures (i.e., "All white women"), and body sizes not representative of their own body size (i.e., "Not many shapes that are similar to black women", "No big girls. Extremely big.") were reported.

The thought listing task also captured frustrations not directly related to the WHR/FRS task. Many respondents verbally expressed their dissatisfaction and outright anger at the questionnaires they were asked to complete and the topics covered (e.g., “Survey is offensive...when asking about ethnicity”, “Does not matter about color of skin”). It is apparent that the African-American participants in this study had a strong reaction toward the assessment of physical attributes, weight, and identification as an African-American woman. Data collection for this study began at a time when the media highly publicized the national weight gain problem, often focusing on the African-American population. The most recent data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES; 1999-2000) indicates that, among women, African-Americans have the highest rate of obesity (Flegal, Carroll, Ogden, & Johnson, 2002). It may be that these women felt singled out as overweight, obese, and unhealthy, contributing to their negative reaction to the present study.

Finally, results from the thought listing task also support previous data suggesting that Caucasian women tend to be more focused on a thin body image ideal than African-American women who are less driven to attain the thin ideal (Abrams et al., 1993; Rucker & Cash, 1992) and more accepting of larger body sizes (Abrams et al., 1993; Botta, 2000; Cash & Henry, 1995; Chandler et al., 1994; Kemper et al., 1993; Miller et al., 2000; Molloy & Herzberger, 1998; Patel & Gray, 2001; Smith et al., 1999). Their reactions suggest that as much as the present research indicates physical factors outside of weight and shape are salient to overall body assessment, weight and shape continue to play an important role in perception of physical attractiveness. Overall, results from this study support recognition of multiple physical and non-physical factors related to “attractiveness” and body image for African-American women (Parker et al., 1995; Rubin et al., 2003).

African-American women clearly identified skin color, hair length, and texture as salient issues in their physical self-assessment. It might be that the more easily malleable characteristic of hair allows African-American women to express an aspect of themselves they might not otherwise be able to express. For these women, straight hair of “long” or “longer” length was most often reported as the ideal. As in previous research, the most oft-reported ideal skin color was lighter tones versus darker tones (i.e., “light skin”, “fair”).

That physical characteristics of skin color, hair length, and texture play such a vital role in African-American physical identity raises the question of the importance of including these features along with size and weight assessments. It may be that possession of the “ideal” skin color and hair attributes yields a social status and acceptance not granted to overweight women who do not possess these characteristics. For African-American women who do not possess the ideal body size, the ability to attain the ideal skin color or hair length might become more salient. Perhaps these physical characteristics are more salient to overall body image assessment for African-American women. If so, is it acceptable for African-American women to alter their skin color or hair length and texture to attain the ideal? The relationship between self-acceptance and physical characteristics (i.e., body shape and weight, hair texture and length, and skin color) in African-American women’s body image assessment is not fully understood. To understand, we must develop an acceptable way to ask the question.

Results of the present study indicate a variety of differences between African-American and Caucasian women. The African-American women identified significantly less with the Western, thin ideal than Caucasian women. African-American women reported significantly more ESF as actual attributes, and less of a discrepancy between their actual-own ideal attributes than the Caucasian participants. As far as ideal weight, African-American participants were

more likely to select an overweight figure, while Caucasian participants were more likely to select an underweight figure. Further, the Caucasian women reported a greater discrepancy between their current perceived weight and their ideal weight. Overall, the African-American women reported more concern related to the WHR/FRS task, while Caucasian women reported more negative thoughts about their physical attributes.

Although the two groups represented in this study exhibited vast differences in their attitudes toward physical appearance, there were also some interesting similarities. Both groups of women reported a large actual-cultural ideal discrepancy indicating a cultural ideal that is very different from their actual physical attributes. For both groups, the majority of respondents indicated an ideal weight within the normal range, as opposed to overweight or underweight, and selected the smallest (.7) WHR as their ideal. Additionally, the majority of women in each group reported a preference for a lower weight, which is consistent with previous research findings (Smith et al., 1999; Thomas, 1988), and no discrepancy between their perceived current and ideal WHR.

#### *Limitations of the Present Study*

Limitations of the present study included language problems with some of the measures and negative reaction to the study which, in combination, may have reduced response rate on some of the measures (i.e., PADQ, WHR/FRS, thought listing task). Making relatively simple changes to the measures might improve participant reactions and response rate in future studies. For each measure discussed, suggestions for change will be provided.

First, although the physical attribute discrepancy questionnaire (PADQ) provided valuable information related to participant's description of salient physical attributes, there were notable problems with the measure in its use in this study. The language and directions on the

PADQ seemed difficult for some participants to understand. In particular, use of the word “attribute” to mean a physical feature was unclear, and required clarification for both African-American and Caucasian participants. For many respondents, the word “attribute” translated to mean personality characteristics, which were not included in analyses. Use of the word “asset”, “feature”, or “characteristic” might simplify the language and allow more respondents to have a clear understanding of what is being asked.

Additionally, at least three participants seemed unclear in the two-part directions of the measure requiring them to list a physical attribute and then rate its importance. Three respondents listed four attributes, and rated them 1, 2, 3, and 4, indicating their understanding of the directions was to list exactly four responses. Finally, because the importance rankings for attributes listed on the PADQ only ranged from one to four, the variability was limited, which may have restricted the ability to attain significance.

In addition to problems with the language on the PADQ, the measure required modification of scoring guidelines to allow for more responses to be included in the analyses. The use of a modified scoring procedure (discrepancies were calculated with a minimum of three responses listed, rather than four) resulted in 57, 69 and 66 total respondents included in the actual-own, actual-cultural, and own-cultural discrepancies, respectively, for the African-American sample. It would be helpful to be clear about the necessity of the minimum number of required responses to code discrepancies. Although some participants may respond with attributes somewhat less important, if they are required to list a minimum number of responses, this information would be more useful than if participants did not respond at all, or responded with too few responses to be included in analyses. Difficulty understanding the PADQ and not having enough responses to score as the measure’s author intended may have impacted results.

It is possible that stronger relationships between the racial identification measures and the body image measures might have been found if there were complete data for the more of the respondents.

Second, many African-American respondents were offended by the WHR/FRS measure. Adjusting the figures to be more representative of women of color is suggested and might increase the likelihood of response on the WHR/FRS task. For example, a wider range of body shapes and sizes would be more representative of ideal figures in the African-American population. Additionally, figures that are larger, but with the same WHRs as on the measure used in this study would allow African-American women to identify with a preferred weight, but also identify with a “curvy” figure. Patel and Gray (2001) removed the most identifiable Caucasoid features on the FRS measure by not including the necks and heads of the figures in use with an African-American population. It would be useful to test this idea to see if African-American or other ethnic minority populations are more accepting of the altered version of the measure in comparison to the original version. Tests of the FRS that vary only in the heads and necks of figures might provide information on the exact extent to which this issue affects participant responses.

#### *Future Directions*

The results of this study affirm the inclusion of a variety of physical features in the exploration of body image among women of various ethnic groups. In particular, this study supported the concept that hair, skin color, and facial features attributes contribute to overall assessment of body image and warrant further investigation among women from ethnic groups not involved in the present study. The inclusion of specific physical attributes in addition to measurement of body size and weight would allow for a more complete understanding of factors

contributing to body image. As shown in the present study, there are likely to be differences in the salience of specific features between, and perhaps within, ethnic groups. Future research may benefit from identifying the relationship between discrepancies in actual and ideal ESF reported, mood, self-esteem and social acceptance.

Future research will also benefit from inclusion of measures that allow participants to record features salient to them rather than rate the salience of features already listed. At this stage of research in the field of body image, measures that allow for open-ended responses can provide valuable information for members of all ethnic groups. Another area in which future research could benefit is in modification of current FRS measures to be more appropriate for non-Caucasian ethnic groups. In actuality, providing a wider range of figures for all ethnic groups could be beneficial considering that the Caucasian participants also commented on the lack of variability in the figures, although to a lesser degree than did the African-American women. Inclusion of additional body shapes and ethnic-specific facial and hair features, or elimination of Caucasoid facial and hair features, are suggested alternatives to the current format of the measure.

The present study provides a starting point to a better understanding of the variety of physical attributes salient to women's body image. Although the present study focused on the preferences of women representing two different ethnic groups, further exploration of ethnic groups as individual entities is warranted. The physical attribute preferences of African-American and Caucasian women indicated some similarities and some interesting differences. Inclusion of women from ethnic groups not represented in this study might supply more specific physical attribute preferences for those women. That is, continued research focused on understanding the preferences of, and within, a single ethnic group rather than a comparison



across ethnic groups should be the focus of future exploration of body image ideal. As exemplified in the present study, all members of a single ethnic group do not express the same physical attribute preferences. Although as a whole the preferences of one ethnic group may be vastly different from another, individual differences (or subgroups) within an ethnic group must also be examined. A comparative process does not allow for identification of specific ethnic group differences.

Finally, although the present study did not focus specifically on health concerns related to physical attributes, a small percentage of African-American and Caucasian participants mentioned health status on the thought listing task. The results of this study confirm the acceptance of larger body weights and figures among African-American women, which coincide with the increasing rates of overweight and obesity within the U.S. population of African-American women (Flegal et al., 2002). The cultural message of self-acceptance regarding heavier weight within the African-American community is generally positive in affirming that physical beauty is more than just weight, shape, and size, however it would be irresponsible not to recognize that increased health problems often result from extreme overweight. Although the theme of “making what you’ve got work for you” (Parker et al., 1995) is positive in theory, the ambivalence with regard to making a change in weight can result in health problems, conflict within the community, and fluctuating levels of dissatisfaction (Baturka, Hornsby & Schorling, 2000). In future research, it will be important to address conflict and potential health concerns with regard to self-acceptance of overweight within the African-American community.

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Appendix A

Include:

Informed Consent, WHR/FRS figures (A & B),





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## Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Exploration of Body Image Among African-American Women

Participant \_\_\_\_\_ HSC Approval Number \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator Shannon Nickens, M.A. PI's Phone Number 314-516-5824

### **Why am I being asked to participate?**

You are invited to participate in a research study about body image conducted by Shannon Nickens, M.A.; Department of Psychology at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. You have been asked to participate in the research because you are female and over age 18 and may be eligible to participate. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the research. Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Missouri-St. Louis. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

### **What is the purpose of this research?**

To explore aspects of body image that are important to African-American women.

### **What procedures are involved?**

If you agree to participate in this research, you can expect:

- You will be asked to complete several questionnaires. One questionnaire will ask for demographic information (e.g., age, education level, marital status). Other questionnaires will focus on discrete aspects of body image including body size, shape, weight, and physical features. Additionally, you will be asked to provide information related to racial identification.
- Estimated length of time required to complete the questionnaires is 15 minutes.

Approximately 100 participants may be involved in this research.

### **What are the potential risks and discomforts?**

There are no risks involved in this research.

### **Are there benefits to taking part in the research?**

There are no direct benefits from participation in this research.

**What about privacy and confidentiality?**

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. No identifying personal information will be linked to the collected data, making it impossible to link you to the study. Participants will provide oral consent as opposed to written consent to further ensure that the data will not be identifiable.

If the resulting data are published, data will be destroyed 5 years after date of publication.

Your information will be shared among members of the research team only until December, 2005.

**Will I be paid for my participation in this research?**

This study will not involve payments of any kind.

**Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?**

You can choose whether to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You also may refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. If you decide to end your participation in the study, please complete the withdrawal letter found at <http://www.umsl.edu/services/ora/IRB.html>, or you may request that the Investigator send you a copy of the letter.

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**

The researcher conducting this study is Shannon Nickens, M.A. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher(s) at 314-516-5824.

**What are my rights as a research subject?**

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at (314) 516-5897.

**What if I am a UMSL student?**

You may choose not to participate, or to stop your participation in this research, at any time. This decision will not affect your class standing or grades at UM-SL. If this happens, your class standing will not be affected. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you participate in this research.

**What if I am a UMSL employee?**

Your participation in this research is, in no way, part of your university duties, and your refusal to participate will not in any way affect your employment with the university or the benefits, privileges, or opportunities associated with your employment at UM-SL. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you participate in this research.

**Remember:** Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

You will be given a copy of this form for your information and to keep for your records.

**I have read the above statement and have been able to express my concerns, to which the investigator has responded satisfactorily. I believe I understand the purpose of the study, as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. Your completion of the surveys attached will indicate your voluntary consent.**

Demographic Questionnaire

- 1.) Please provide your age:
- 2.) Please provide your country of birth:
- 3.) Please provide your current relationship status:
  - Single
  - Partnered
  - Married
  - Divorced
  - Widowed
- 4.) Please provide your ethnic group membership:
- 5.) Please indicate highest level of education completed:
  - Did not complete high school
  - High School equivalency (GED)
  - High School
  - Technical school
  - Some college
  - College graduate
  - Some post-graduate education
  - Graduate degree
- 6.) What is your average yearly household income before taxes?
  - \$0----\$10,000
  - \$10,000----\$20,000
  - \$20,000----\$30,000
  - \$30,000----\$40,000
  - \$40,000----\$50,000
  - \$50,000----\$60,000
  - \$60,000----\$70,000
  - Over \$70,000

**PHYSICAL AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY ATTITUDES SCALE-Revised**

Please complete the following items as accurately as you can.

1. I feel that it is unacceptable/inappropriate to wear natural hairstyles (afro, braids, etc.) to work.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------------	---------	-------------------	----------	-------------------

2. I would prefer a lighter, fairer spouse or partner to a darker or browner partner.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------------	---------	-------------------	----------	-------------------

3. African Americans/Blacks are more attractive when their features appear less African and more "mixed."

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------------	---------	-------------------	----------	-------------------

4. I would prefer a lighter child to a darker child.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------------	---------	-------------------	----------	-------------------

5. I feel it is unacceptable/inappropriate to wear natural hairstyles (afro, braids, etc.) at formal and/or racially mixed social functions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------------	---------	-------------------	----------	-------------------

6. Blacks/African Americans who have lighter or fairer skin tones are generally better looking than those with darker or browner skin tones.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------------	---------	-------------------	----------	-------------------

7. African Americans/Blacks with a slender nose are more attractive than those with broader, flatter noses.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------------	---------	-------------------	----------	-------------------

8. African American/Black women with long, "good" hair are more attractive than African American/Black women with short, natural hair.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------------	---------	-------------------	----------	-------------------

### Racial Identity Salience

Thompson Sanders (1995)  
(Adapted from White & Burke, 1987)

Please answer the questions that follow using the scale below.

<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Somewhat Important</b>	<b>Not Important</b>

#### (Salience)

- \_\_\_ 1. How important is it that your co-workers view and accept you as Black/African American?
- \_\_\_ 2. How important is it that your friends view and accept you as Black/African American?
- \_\_\_ 3. How important is it that people in general view and accept you as Black/African American?
- \_\_\_ 4. How important is it that your peers view and accept you as Black/African American?
- \_\_\_ 5. How important is it that your family views you and themselves as Black/African American?

#### (Centrality)

- \_\_\_ 6. How important are race and racial identity in your family?
- \_\_\_ 7. How important are race and racial identity to you?
- \_\_\_ 8. How important are race and racial identity to your sense of who you are?
- \_\_\_ 9. How important are race and racial identity in peers understanding who you are?
- \_\_\_ 10. How important are race and racial identity to co-workers understanding who you are?

**Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire- Internalization**

1. Women who appear in TV shows and movies project the type of appearance that I see as my goal.

1	2	3	4	5
completely disagree		neither agree nor disagree		completely agree

2. I believe that clothes look better on thin models.

1	2	3	4	5
completely disagree		neither agree nor disagree		completely agree

3. Music videos that show thin women make me wish that I were thin.

1	2	3	4	5
completely disagree		neither agree nor disagree		completely agree

4. I do not wish to look like the models in the magazines.

1	2	3	4	5
completely disagree		neither agree nor disagree		completely agree

5. I tend to compare my body to people in magazines and on TV.

1	2	3	4	5
completely disagree		neither agree nor disagree		completely agree

6. Photographs of thin women make me wish that I were thin.

1	2	3	4	5
completely disagree		neither agree nor disagree		completely agree

7. I wish I looked like a swimsuit model.

1	2	3	4	5
completely disagree		neither agree nor disagree		completely agree

8. I often read magazines like *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue*, and *Glamour* and compare my appearance to the models.

1	2	3	4	5
completely disagree		neither agree nor disagree		completely agree

### Physical Appearance Questionnaire (Altabe, 1996)

Please list the physical appearance attributes of the type of person YOU believe you ACTUALLY are NOW.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

For each physical appearance attribute above, rate the extent to which YOU believe you ACTUALLY possess the attribute, using the following scale.

1	2	3	4
slightly	moderately	a great deal	extremely

Please list the physical appearance attributes of the type of person YOU believe you would IDEALLY like to be (i.e., wish, desire, or hope to be).

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

For each physical appearance attribute above, rate the extent to which YOU believe you would IDEALLY like to possess the trait, using the following scale.

1	2	3	4
slightly	moderately	a great deal	extremely



Please list the physical appearance attributes of the type of person YOUR SOCIETY/CULTURE would IDEALLY like you to look like.

1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____

For each physical appearance attribute above, rate the extent to which YOUR SOCIETY/ CULTURE would IDEALLY like you to possess the attribute, using the following scale.

1	2	3	4
slightly	moderately	a great deal	extremely

### Scoring Rules for Physical Appearance Discrepancy

The goal of scoring is to assess the extent to which the subjects' ideal differs from their actual appearance. The focus is on the ideal list as it compares to the actual trait list. Use the following scoring guidelines in the order of priority given below. Begin by comparing the ideal trait list with the actual trait list. At least 4 traits must be on the ideal list. If there are less than 4 traits, do not score. Note however that "compound" ideals such as "long brown hair" would count as 2 different traits (long hair and brown hair).

#### The Non-Discrepancy Rule

If the ideal trait exactly matches an actual trait (the same word or a synonym and the same extent number). Score it as "-2."

Actual List: blue eyes; 3                      Ideal List: blue eyes; 3                      score of "-2"

#### The Value Discrepancy Rule

If the ideal trait is the same as or a synonym of an actual trait but differs in extent number take the absolute value of the difference in extent numbers.

Actual List: blue eyes; 4                      Ideal List: blue eyes; 2                      score of "2"

#### The Opposing Discrepancy Rule

If the ideal trait is the exact opposite of an actual trait, score it as "4," regardless of extent numbers. Also consider different hair color, and different eye color to be opposites.

Actual List: fat; 2                              Ideal List: thin; 4                              score of "4"

#### The Relative Discrepancy Rule

A term usually stated with a suffix of "er" indicating a desire for more of this trait is called a Relative Discrepancy. A desire for less of a trait would fall into this area as well. Examples include, taller, thinner, more muscular, etc. To score these, take the extent number of the ideal trait.

Actual List: tan; 2                              Ideal List: more tan; 3                              score of "3"  
Actual List: nothing                              Ideal List: lighter hair; 2                              score of "2"

#### The Ambiguous Discrepancy Rule

If the trait listed on ideal list is not a synonym or antonym of a trait listed on actual list, but clearly describes the same trait, this is scored as "2."

Actual List: medium height; 3                      Ideal List: tall; 4                      score of "2"

For each trait on the ideal list try to apply one of these rules. If none of the rules apply to an ideal trait, score it as "0." Then add up the total for that ideal list. This is the discrepancy score.

## WHR Questionnaire

**For the following questions, refer to the figures on the attached page.**

Note that each figure is marked with a **NUMBER AND A LETTER** underneath it. In answering the following questions, please indicate your response with **BOTH** the **LETTER** and the **NUMBER** of the figure you have selected.

Note that you **MAY** choose the same figure for more than one answer if you wish. You may also choose different figures for different questions. It is up to you.

1.) Choose the figure that best represents your current appearance. Indicate the **NUMBER** and **LETTER** of your selection below.

---

2.) Choose the figure that you would most like to look like. Indicate the **NUMBER** and **LETTER** of your selection below.

---

3.) Choose the figure that you think is most attractive to men. Indicate the **NUMBER** and **LETTER** of your selection below.

---

A

A



(U8)



(U7)



(O8)



(N7)



(N10)



(O10)



(O9)



(N9)



(U10)



(U9)



(O7)



(N8)

B  
B



(O7)



(U7)



(N8)



(N9)



(N10)



(O9)



(U9)



(U8)



(N7)



(U10)



(O10)



(O8)

Evaluation of Body Image Task

Thought Listing

In the spaces below, list all of the **thoughts and ideas** that you had while completing the body image rating task. Write the first thought that comes to mind of the first line, the second thought on the second line and so forth. You might have had positive, negative or neutral thoughts and ideas about the task. All of your ideas and thoughts are fine. Short phrases and statements are okay and you do not have to fill in every line.

**Remember, put only one thought or idea on each line.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_
13. \_\_\_\_\_
14. \_\_\_\_\_
15. \_\_\_\_\_
16. \_\_\_\_\_
17. \_\_\_\_\_
18. \_\_\_\_\_
19. \_\_\_\_\_
20. \_\_\_\_\_

Coding Categories for Thought Listing Task:

1. Task-related comments

- a. Emotion- anger, frustration, difficulty re: task
- b. Critique general to overall questionnaire
- c. Specific critique of WHR

- 1. Figures don't look like me.
- 2. Figures all look the same.
- 3. All body types not represented.

Category 3 was subdivided into two categories (3 and 4) for African-American respondents to best represent the data.

- a) Figures don't represent AA women
- b) Figures look like White women

- 4. Non-specific critique.

Example comments:

“ I think the pictures don't represent true black women”.

“The pictures look like white women”.

“I don't identify”

“No one looked like me”.

2. Personal body image thoughts:

- a. emotions (i.e., worry, depressed)
- b. positive/neutral thoughts (e.g., “I'm not going to change”)
- c. negative thoughts (e.g., “I'm sexier when I'm thin”)
- d. frustration/anger directed toward society, media (i.e., too much focus on body image)

3. Body image comments related to physical health

Example comments:

“I don't want to be thin-thin, but I need to lose weight for health reasons”.

4. Body image comments related to ethnicity/identity.

Example comments:

“I realize that racial issues are still important”

Appendix B



Table B1. African-American Responses on PADQ

	Cultural Ideal	Own Ideal
Eye color	12	5
Nose size	3	4
Nose shape	2	0
Lips	7	3
Teeth	6	0
Cheekbones	1	1
Neck	0	1
Skin color	44	14
White	7	0
Complexion	3	7
Pretty hair	3	0
Hair length	43	21
Hair- permed, straight, wavy	16	7
Hair-thickness	0	3
Hair color	8	3
Hair texture	3	4
Fingernails	0	2
Less weight	52	26
More weight	0	4
Height	31	22
Breasts-larger	21	11
Breasts-smaller	0	3
Nice, firm breasts	2	1
Perfect breasts	2	0
Waist	10	7
Flat stomach	7	18
Hips	8	3
Buttocks (larger)	18	5
Buttocks (smaller)	6	2
Nice buttocks	1	0
Firm butt	1	1
Legs	5	4
Thighs	3	7
Feet	6	8
Muscle tone	4	13
Healthy	4	5
Shapely	3	1
Small features	2	1
Attractive	1	5
Build	11	6
Arms	2	5
Thick	3	2
Full figure	1	0

**Table B 2. Traditional Body Image Features**

	<b>Height</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Breast Size</b>	<b>Stomach/ Waist</b>	<b>Legs/ Thighs</b>	<b>Fit/ Toned</b>
<b>Actual*</b>						
African-American	44.1%	58.6%	35.1%	26.1%	34.2%	7.2%
Caucasian	60.5%	65.8%	31.6%	18.4%	23.7%	13.2%
<b>Own Ideal**</b>						
African-American	34.0%	49.5%	24.3%	34.0%	20.4%	19.4%
Caucasian	23.7%	55.3%	23.7%	26.3%	23.7%	44.7%
<b>Cultural Ideal***</b>						
African-American	41.8%	68.4%	29.6%	25.5%	15.3%	4.1%
Caucasian	41.0%	76.9%	46.2%	17.9%	25.6%	28.2%

\* N=111; \*\* N=103; \*\*\* N=98 for African-American sample  
 N=38 for Caucasian sample

Table B3. African American Sample: Dependent variable correlations

	Physical Racial Identity	Racial Identity Saliency	SATAQ
Racial Identity Saliency	.06	--	--
SATAQ	-.40**	-.02	--
Ideal Weight	.09	.02	-.03
Perceived Current Weight	-.01	-.10	.15
Weight discrepancy	-.06	.10	-.18
Ideal WHR	-.11	-.10	-.07
Perceived Current WHR	-.03	-.05	.03
WHR discrepancy	-.05	-.06	-.09
PADQ discrepancy: Own Ideal-Actual	-.10	-.23	.23
PADQ discrepancy: Cultural Ideal-Actual	.22	-.04	-.13
PADQ discrepancy: Cultural Ideal-Own Ideal	.10	-.15	.01

Weight & WHR N= 102; PADQ Own Ideal-Actual N= 57; PADQ Cultural Ideal- Actual N= 69; PADQ Cultural Ideal-Own Ideal N= 66.

\* p < .05; \*\* p < .01

Table B4. Caucasian sample: Dependent variable correlations table

	SATAQ	PADQ discrepancy: Cultural Ideal- Own Ideal	PADQ discrepancy: Cultural Ideal- Actual	PADQ discrepancy: Own Ideal- Actual
Ideal Weight	-.26	.15	-.01	.06
Perceived Current Weight	-.31*	-.15	-.21	.10
Weight discrepancy	.13	.31	.25	-.07
Ideal WHR	.05	-.13	.18	.04
Perceived Current WHR	-.06	-.04	-.06	.11
WHR discrepancy	.09	-.05	.16	-.06
PADQ discrepancy: Own Ideal-Actual	-.34	.22	.12	
PADQ discrepancy: Cultural Ideal- Actual	-.00	.60**		
PADQ discrepancy: Cultural Ideal- Own Ideal	-.22			

WHR & Weight N= 39; PADQ Own Ideal- Actual N= 24; PADQ Cultural Ideal- Actual N= 31; PADQ Cultural Ideal-Own Ideal N= 29.

\* p=.059 \*\* p < .01

Table B5. Thought Listing Task Responses

	<b>African-American*</b>	<b>Caucasian**</b>
1a) Emotion- anger, frustration, difficulty re: task	N=9; 3.8%	N=6; 3.6%
1b) Critique general to overall questionnaire	N=25; 10.5%	N=7; 4.2%
1c) Specific critique of WHR/FRS task	N=83; 34.9%	N=17; 10.1%
2a) Personal body image thoughts: Negative emotions	N=7; 2.9%	N=4; 2.4%
2b) Personal body image thoughts: positive/neutral thoughts	N=41; 17.2%	N=40; 23.8%
2c) Personal body image thoughts: negative thoughts	N=23; 9.7%	N=59; 35.1%
2d) Personal body image thoughts: frustration/anger directed toward society, media	N=26; 10.9%	N=25; 14.9%
3) Body image comments related to physical health	N=3; 1.3%	N=10; 5.9%
4) Body image comments related to ethnicity/identity	N=21; 8.8%	N=0; 0%

† Note: N is the number of responses, which is greater than number of respondents (\*N= 101; \*\*N= 38) due to the possibility of multiple responses from each respondent.

*Response critique of WHR/FRS*

<b>Response</b>	<b>African American</b>	<b>Caucasian</b>
Figures don't look like me.	N=23, 28%	N=5; 29%
Figures all look the same.	N=30, 36%	N=4; 24%
All body types not represented.	--	N=6, 35%
Figures don't represent AA women.	N=16; 19%	--
Figures look like White women.	N=11, 13%	--
Non-specific critique.	N=3, 4%	N=2, 12%