

BODY IMAGE PERCEPTION AND DISTRESS IN INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

- Indigenous peoples continue to grapple with the consequences of forced separation from their cultural traditions, language, and land. Across all ethnic groups, they exhibit higher rates of mental illness, diabetes and obesity, and experience lower life expectancy [1].
- Disturbances in body image perceptions have typically been conceptualized as a concern mainly for white Western women [2].
- Emerging research has shown that people of color also worry about their body image in comparison to their ideals, however they also endorse less thin body image ideals in contrast to their white counterparts [3].
- The current study seeks to investigate perceptions of body image and their relation to depressive symptoms in a sample of Indigenous students.

HYPOTHESES

1. Is high dissatisfaction with current body perception (i.e., larger discrepancy between actual & idealized body image) related to depressive symptoms?
2. Do ideal body-image, perceptions of body size and health differ in the self vs. others?

Poster presented on the 24th of April 2019
at the SUNY Potsdam Learning and
Research Fair 2019, Potsdam, NY

We would like to thank the
following for their support:

Office of Native
American Affairs
SUNY Potsdam

METHODS

Participants

- Indigenous students
- Projected total sample, N = 60
- Participants are not restricted to a specific Indigenous group
- Bring a registered Tribe member is not necessary

Measures

• Body Image

- *Modified Body Image Survey (mBIS, Cinelli, 2013)*

• Depressive Symptoms

- *Center for Epidemiological Studies of Depression Scale (CES-D, March, 1997)*

Procedure: Global Study

Assessment 1: Following consent procedures, participants complete an online questionnaire of 21 scales. Directly after, a contextual-threat interview is undertaken using the *UCLA Episodic Life Stress Interview* (Rudolph & Hammen, 1999).

Assessment 2: In a follow-up interview conducted one week later, participants complete a clinical interview using the DSM-5 based Mood Disorders Interview (APA, 2013). Participants are then debriefed, then compensated for their time.

The scales for the current study are embedded within the questionnaire package in Assessment 1.

References

- [1] Bramley, et al. (2004). Indigenous disparities in disease-specific mortality, a cross-country comparison: New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States. *The New Zealand Medical Journal*, 117(1207), 1-16; Fagot-Campagna, et al. (2000). Type 2 diabetes among North American children and adolescents: An epidemiologic review and a public health perspective. *Journal of Pediatrics*, 136, 664-72; Zepher, et al. (1999). Prevalence of overweight and obesity in Native American School children and adolescents in the Aberdeen area: A population study. *International Journal of Obesity Related Metabolic Disorders*, 23(2), 28-30.
- [2] Bordo (2013). Not Just "a White Girl's Thing": The Changing Face of Food and Body Image Problems. In Counihan & Van Esterik (Eds.), *Food and Culture: A Reader* Third Edition (pp. 265-275). New York: Routledge; Chithambo, & Huey, (2013). Black/White differences in perceived weight and attractiveness among overweight women. *Journal of Obesity*, 2013, 1-4; Forbes, et al. (2012). Body dissatisfaction and disordered eating in three cultures: Argentina, Brazil, and U.S. *Sex Roles*, 69(9-10), 677-694.
- [3] Chithambo, & Huey, (2013). Black/White differences in perceived weight and attractiveness among overweight women. *Journal of Obesity*, 2013, 1-4; Cinelli, & O'Dea (2009). Body image and obesity among Australian adolescents from Indigenous and Anglo-European backgrounds: implications for health promotion and obesity prevention among Aboriginal youth. *Health Education Research*, 24(6), 1059-1068; Warren, et al. (2005). Ethnicity as a protective factor against internalization of a thin ideal and body dissatisfaction. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 37(3), 241-249.

SCALES

❖ Modified Body Image Survey

(mBIS, Cinelli, 2013): This scale was originally developed by an Aboriginal researcher to measure body image specifically in Aboriginal women. Our modification adapted the scale for use with Indigenous persons of all genders. The scale assesses: 1) Body-image satisfaction, 2) Perceptions about weight & size in self & others, and 3) Body ideals in self & others.

The measure uses the **Stunkard Silhouette Figures**: nine male and female body silhouettes ranging from *very thin* (1) to *very obese* (9) (Stunkard et al., 1983). These are used to measure **perceptions** of current weight/shape, **desired** weight/shape, and **ideal** male and female figures.



❖ Centre for Epidemiological Studies of Depression

(CES-D, March, 1997): This scale consists of 20 items, designed to assess **depressive symptoms** over the past week. The CES-D has been shown to be valid and reliable in cross-cultural studies.

RESULTS

We predict that Indigenous students who express higher levels of dissatisfaction with their current body image will exhibit higher levels of depressive symptoms. In addition, we expect that students of Indigenous descent will endorse less thin ideals than are typically found in white samples.

Coming soon to a poster board near you!

DISCUSSION

- This research aims to extend emerging research on body image perceptions by focusing on an Indigenous sample.
- Indigenous peoples around the globe have historically, and continue to be, underrepresented in research, and underserved by health and mental health interventions.
- It is therefore important that we investigate body image perceptions in Indigenous communities as there is currently too little information to provide culturally sensitive health and educational services.
- **Strengths:** Indigenous sample, indigenous measure, widened to include all genders.
- **Limitations:** a relatively small sample, all students, predominately from a single Nation, self-reports only.