The Gay Image: Factors that Predict Thin and Muscular Body Image Dissatisfaction in Gay Men

Abstract:
This study aimed to determine predictors of both muscular and thinness body image dissatisfaction in gay men. It was predicted that there would be a positive association between internalized homophobia, conformity to masculine norms, exposure to the media and gay media and body image dissatisfaction. It was predicted that exposure to the media and gay media would contribute the most variance in muscular and thinness body image dissatisfaction and that exposure to media and gay media would relate more to muscular body image dissatisfaction than to thinness body image dissatisfaction.

Furthermore it was predicted that internalized homophobia would contribute a unique amount of variance in both muscular and thinness body image dissatisfaction and that masculine norms would contribute a unique amount of variance in muscular body image dissatisfaction. One hundred and nineteen gay men completed a web-based survey and four multiple regressions indicated factors (i.e. media, internalized homophobia and masculine norms) contributed to thinness body image dissatisfaction (22% of the variance) and muscular body image dissatisfaction (41% of the variance). Internalized homophobia provided a unique contribution to the regression model for thinness body image dissatisfaction (accounting for 4% of the variance).

Exposure to the media and gay media accounted for 17% of the variance in thinness body image dissatisfaction and 40% of the variance in muscular body image dissatisfaction. The impact of cultural media imagery, traditional masculine ideologies, and internalized homophobia on body image and the psychological well-being of gay men are discussed together with preventative and remedial clinical health psychology applications.