

Thoughts about the Self in the Context of Society

Tanja Samardzic & Catherine T. Kwantes

Western contexts tend to be conducive to the development of body dissatisfaction instead of body appreciation (Thompson & Stice, 2001). Unrealistic appearance ideals persist and create pressure for women to conform, even with advancements towards more gender egalitarianism (i.e., attitudes toward gender equality in society). A Metapersonal self-construal, reflecting the perception of an interconnectedness with nature and humanity (DeCicco & Stroink, 2007), may help foster body appreciation by buffering the negative effects of societal pressure to achieve a thin ideal. We therefore aimed to explore how cultural and personality factors intersected to influence young women's body appreciation. We recruited young women ($N = 204$), who completed online measures of gender egalitarianism, pressure to be thin, Metapersonal self-orientation, and body appreciation. We used Hayes' (2017) PROCESS macro to conduct moderated mediation analyses. When exploring the effect of gender egalitarianism as it is currently perceived to be on women's body appreciation, the association was accounted for by pressure to be thin, and orientation to the Metapersonal self did not operate in a buffering way. However, when investigating gender egalitarianism as it 'should be', pressure to be thin was no longer accounted for the relationship; instead, Metapersonal self-construal emerged as a protective factor in fostering body appreciation. The findings provide a snapshot of the differences and mismatch between gender egalitarianism as is/'should be' and how body appreciation is impacted within each context. They further suggest that culture and personality interact in nuanced ways to predict body appreciation in young women.