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**MISERY LOVES COMPANY: A PERPETUATION OF BODY
DISSATISFACTION IN SORORITY WOMEN**

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Abstract

Prior research shows that struggling with body image is a problem among the college women population. This struggle is compounded in the sorority environment due to a few factors. High socio-economic status is a risk factor for body image struggles according to the research because of the cost of being a member of a sorority. The formal recruitment process also contributes to this problem as recruitment requires quick interactions almost entirely based on appearance. Rejection from an organization can cause women to associate the rejection with their body. A common characteristic of being a sorority member is living among other women in a sorority house. Research shows that women living among all women can contribute to body image struggles and disordered eating. Women model each other's behavior and compare themselves to other women which can lead to lowered self-esteem.

Introduction

Each year women are welcomed into their chosen university looking for ways to make new friends and connections. Women are contacted through various means and recruited to join sorority life. Being a sorority member brings multiple benefits. A student's social involvement becomes much greater as a result of being involved in a Greek organization, and students feel more connected to their university when they become part of a sorority or fraternity (Pike, 2000). Current members of sororities accept women of all shapes and sizes insisting and genuinely believing that everyone can find a home in a sorority. Current members innocently forget the tremendous transitional challenges that first-year students bring with them to their new home at a university. Some women arrive at college with a history of body dissatisfaction.

Others' body image may be affected by the unique process called formal sorority recruitment that typically happens only a few weeks into a student's first year. Recruitment is characterized by quick, potentially stressful interactions with each sorority on campus over the course of a week or a weekend. This can affect the body image of a recruitment participant because the women are primarily judged on appearance because of the little time the initiated women have to understand who they are as individuals. This effect is compounded if women experience rejection from one of the sororities. Because the interactions are short and based heavily on appearance, rejection leads the young women participating in recruitment to believe that their body is not up to the standards of their ideal organization.

If accepted into a sorority, newly recruited women may choose to live among their new friends in a sorority house where they may live with as many as 100 other women. Sorority women already are at risk for body dissatisfaction because of their age and their typically higher socioeconomic status (Alexander, 1998). Both of these factors have been found to be predictors of body dissatisfaction. I hypothesize that all of the above factors may play a role in a sorority woman's body image. I further hypothesize that women with body dissatisfaction are more likely to be attracted to sororities, women who participate in the recruitment process are more likely to experience negative emotions about their body and that women living with many other women in a sorority house setting will have negative consequences related to body image. These predisposing characteristics, along with the sorority recruitment process, followed by a living environment exclusively with other women could provide an environment that creates and perpetuates norms that are detrimental to the body image of a young woman. The problem of this study is to identify the impact sorority recruitment and membership has on the body image of college women. Specifically, I will address what effect sorority membership has on the body image of college women, if women with body dissatisfaction are more likely to join a sorority, what role if any does formal recruitment play in the development of body dissatisfaction in college women and how does a residential environment exclusively comprised of women play a role in body image.

The purpose of this study is to identify whether sorority membership has an effect on the body image of college women. Women with body dissatisfaction are prone to lower self-esteem as well as disordered eating behaviors. Sorority membership includes multiple benefits to a student's college experience. If sororities are contributing to potentially negative experiences of their members such as body objectification, we as sorority professionals need to find avenues to remedy this. Sorority professionals may be able to use this research to restructure the aspects that are contributing to these feelings among their members. One of these aspects needing some significant changes could be formal recruitment.

Formal recruitment is a process widely used on college campuses. Formal recruitment is a very efficient way to intake members; however, the emotional consequences of participating in formal recruitment have not been efficiently assessed. If I can identify some problems in sorority recruitment, then we may be able to bring healthier women into our organizations and keep them satisfied throughout their time as sorority members. These results will assist sorority professionals in creating the best environment for potential new members and current members of sororities.

Review of the Literature

College Females and Body Dissatisfaction

Body dissatisfaction in college women is quickly becoming an issue in the forefront of higher education administrators' minds. Society has created something researchers have labeled "the thin ideal." Due to this phenomenon, women have misconceived notions of their body size. Gillen and Lefkowitz (2006) found that "women who were more oriented toward their appearance, evaluated their appearance less favorably, and were less satisfied with their body areas than were men" (p.30). A study by Bungum and Lofton (2003) supports this finding, that even though the men in their study were statistically more obese than the women, the women showed greater psychological concern about their bodies. Though men are not immune to body dissatisfaction, it seems this problem is more prevalent in women, especially college women. College women are much more likely than working women to engage in disordered eating behaviors (Nelson, Hughes, Katz & Searight, 1999). This finding implies that the thin ideal emerges from more than age as originally believed.

There is something about the university setting in particular that causes body dissatisfaction in women (Hart & Ollendick, 1985). Sriegel-Moore, Silberstein and Rod (1986) suggest that college is a unique environment in which body dissatisfaction and disordered eating might be amplified because of the closed atmosphere it provides. Students are separated from the rest of society and rely on their peers for social cues. This becomes a place where amplified societal norms can develop.

Sororities and Body Image

The research shows that there has been an increase in body dissatisfaction within the past few decades in female college students. If college administrators are concerned about females in relation to body dissatisfaction, sororities are a logical point of concern by virtue of the fact that they are the largest self-governed female organization on most campuses (Becker, Ciao & Smith, 2008). Sorority members also tend to hold a higher socioeconomic status due to the expenses involved with being a sorority member. High socioeconomic status has been linked with eating disordered behaviors in women, placing sorority women at a higher risk for eating disordered behaviors than the average college woman (Alexander, 1998).

In addition to sororities being a large proportion of college females, research suggests that sorority women are at higher risk for body dissatisfaction than the rest of the female college population. A study by Arthur (1999) found that “the idealized image for sorority members is fashionable, classy, thin, tanned, feminine, well-dressed, and (often) blonde” (p. 88). Sorority women have a higher drive for thinness than other women on college campuses (Schulken, Pinciario, Sawyer, Jensen & Hoban (1997). A drive for thinness often causes college women to search for unhealthy weight control methods in an attempt to achieve an unrealistic image (Tylka & Sybich, 2004). One common weight control method is smoking. Sorority women habitually smoke more than non-greek members (Scott-Sheldon, Carey & Carey, 2007). Unhealthy weight control methods in the pursuit of thinness can often extend to the development of eating disorders in female college students. Reeves and Johnson (1992) found that “Members and pledges of sororities report considerably higher eating-disordered attitudes and behaviors than does the average college woman (p.48). Sororities have also been found to exhibit a greater risk for bulimia (Kashubeck, Marchand-Martella, Neal & Larsen, 1997). Some studies suggested that the drinking culture associated with Greek membership contributes to the development of bulimic symptoms in women. One study found that 60.7% of women who vomit after drinking also vomit after eating (Meilman, Von Hippel & Gaylor, 1991). Desantis (2007) also found the link between alcohol consumption and symptoms to be consistent in his conversations with sorority women finding “alcohol in conjunction with starvation was discovered to be a fun and effortless way to keep one’s girlish figure” (p. 127). Women in his study would look to purging after drinking as a means to “undo” the damage the calories from the alcohol did to their weight management routine.

The research may range from body dissatisfaction all the way to eating disordered behaviors but it is evident from the research that there is a problem. It is also important to note that many of these women are not simply seeking a healthier lifestyle, but research suggests that sorority women also have distorted perceptions of their bodies (Schulken, Pinciario, Sawyer, Jensen & Hoban (1997). A study by Selzer (2006) found that African American sorority women, a group often seen as being immune to body dissatisfaction, think about body image every day.

Gender theorists have examined the topic of body dissatisfaction in sororities. Young women entering sororities are still in the process of developing what it means to be a woman. Sorority women can have a large part in shaping the construction of femininity (Arthur, 1999). Sorority women often embrace the stereotypes associated with femininity. “The sorority constantly reinforces the feminine stereotype” (Arthur, 1999, p.89). Sorority members also tend to come from families displaying stereotypical gender roles with a stay at home mother (Arthur, 1999). They also display “clothing styles that tended to be much more feminine than androgynous or masculine” (Arthur, 1999, p.87). Higher levels of femininity have been found to be a predictor of body dissatisfaction (Romero, 2008). The same is true for higher pressure to conform to a feminine gender role. This pressure has been associated with symptoms of bulimia (Romero, 2008). It also has been found that a focus on non-traditional gender -roles can have a positive impact on body image perception in women. A traditional gender role for women includes special attention to clothing and grooming and is associated with lower self-esteem for women who adopt these roles (Lennon, Rudd, Sloan & Kim, 1999).

The Sorority as a Social System

Being a member of a social group is related to both body image and self-esteem (Lennon, Rudd, Sloan & Kim, 1999). In a social system, what the most popular members do is considered normal behavior, and those women who deviate from these norms become unpopular (Crandall, 1988). Because a sorority forms as a unique social system even within the already closed feeling college environment, they are able to create and perpetuate their own norms. College students are especially susceptible to peer influence and the norms around them during their transition to college when they are feeling most insecure (Greenberg, Delinsky, Reese, Buhlmann & Wilhelm, 2010).

Research has shown that body dissatisfaction and obsession over the thin ideal is becoming a norm at many universities and is becoming an extreme in many sororities. Research has been reinforcing this thin ideal long before this generation of students. In the book by Margaret Rose, *Rush: A Girl's Guide to Sorority Success* (1985), the author suggested that women should strive to meet their ideal weight before entering the recruitment process because they will be judged almost solely on appearance. This common “drive for thinness” ideal can be dangerous when one views a sorority as a social system because there is a strong correlation between sociocultural pressure for thinness and body image disturbance (Tylka & Subich, 2004). A study by Kashubeck, Marchand-Martella, Neal and Larsen (1997) found that women in sororities were more likely to exhibit symptoms of bulimia if they knew others who purged compared to non-members and Crandall (1988) discovered that sorority members adopted bingeing patterns similar to their friends over time. This idea is supported by Smith and Ransford (1999) findings that show stronger instances of conformity among sorority members than non-sorority members. Sorority membership becomes a large part of one's identity (Allison & Park, 2003). Arthur (1999) says “the difference between the ideal for women in general

and sorority women is that for the sororities, the image is much more salient and is a gender role obligation” (p.88). If the thin ideal is part of the value system of an organization, it is likely that the sorority members will integrate these values into their identity.

Factors for Sorority Membership and Recruitment

Although previous research has shown that that college women experience high levels of body dissatisfaction, these ideals start before a woman enters college. Family can be a large contributing factor to a student’s eating habits. Sriegel-Moore, Silberstein and Rod (1986) suggest that the amount of emphasis a family (particularly the women in the family) place on weight and body image is related to a woman’s risk of bulimia. In contrast, women who perceive their family of origin to have healthy eating habits were less likely to report eating disordered behaviors (Reeves & Johnson, 1992). If women have positive expectations communicated to them through their parents, peer influence regarding unhealthy weight control methods can be moderated (Young, 2005).

Though African American women are often seen as a group immune to body dissatisfaction, family plays an important role in the development of body dissatisfaction in African American sorority women. African American sorority women feel that family criticism affects their body image negatively (Selzer, 2006). Some evidence suggests that women attracted to sororities are more likely to have pre-existing issues with body image including eating disordered behaviors (Rolnik, Engeln-Maddox & Miller, 2010).

Allison and Park (2003) disagreed with the majority of the literature stating that their research suggests that there is no difference between sorority and non-sorority women before they join. This is in contrast with the theme of the research being that women are attracted to other women like them. This includes other women with body dissatisfaction.

There is a small amount of research in the area of sorority recruitment. There is even less research on the emotional impact recruitment has on both members and non-members. However, “the rush process involves an ongoing series of interpersonal interactions during which participants are being evaluated in part on the basis of their physical appearance (Ronik, Engeln-Maddox & Miller, 2010). Arthur (1999) describes the process as “a social obstacle course in which favorably received members won a bid, and became pledges” (p.88). It seems logical to assume that recruitment has some effect on the emotional well-being of students due to the quick interactions which lead student’s to become aware that they are being primarily judged on appearance (Rolnik, Engeln-Maddox and Miller, 2010). Research shows that men attempting to join a fraternity are much less affected by the pressure to be an ideal image of themselves during the recruitment process. A study by Keller & Hart (1982) found that “Sorority non pledges were more prone than their fraternity counterparts to perceive rush as having weakened their confidence in the attractiveness of their personality [and] their ability to make a

good impression in a social situation” (p. 259). One sorority woman explained the criteria her sorority looks for in new members stating that they love skinny women because they make their sorority look better and big girls usually do not have a chance (Desantis, 2007). It seems logical that an observant recruitment participant could become aware of the current members disapproval during the process. If a participant were not aware, they may become aware due to the nature of the process by being rejected from their sorority of choice. (Rolnik, Engeln-Maddox and Miller (2010) found that recruitment participants evidenced higher levels of eating disordered behaviors at all points during recruitment. This suggests that women are aware of the added pressure recruitment causes to be thin and beautiful. In a study by Arthur (1999), a beauty shop manager was interviewed saying, “before rush happens, we have to stock up on bleach because so many girls go blonde and our tanning bed is the busiest ever” (p.88). This pressure makes it difficult to be authentic through the recruitment process. Research shows that people who are less authentic in their relationships have a more dissatisfied view of their body (Gillen & Lefkowitz, 2006). This pressure to be someone wanted by a sorority rather than being able to express individual characteristics could compound the negative effects of recruitment.

Frederickson and Roberts (1997) discussed objectification theory, which is based on the idea that women develop their body concept based on the perceived perceptions. If women do not persist through the recruitment process, a woman may internalize this perceived perception that their body did not fit the standards of a certain sorority. “Because success or lack of success in rush can be perceived as a form of peer evaluation, failure to be accepted into a Greek letter organization, can communicate a harsh message to students concerning their personal traits or ability to fit into a group” (Keller and Hart, 1982).

Contrasting Recruitment Experiences

There are some inconsistencies in the research which depend on whether a woman actually ends up joining an organization. Women who do choose to join an organization speak favorably about their experience during recruitment and believe it was worthwhile. This contrasts with students who did not join an organization who leave the recruitment process feeling as if they were not able to be themselves (Keller, 1978). In addition, students who joined a sorority felt that recruitment was a neutral or positive experience, while students who do not end up joining find recruitment to have a neutral or negative effect on their college experience (Keller & Hart, 1982). Keller and Hart (1982) identified two items that were different between members and non-members: attractiveness of personality and ability to make a good impression in social situations.

There were also differences found in the size of women attempting to join. According to a study by Rolnik, Engeln-Maddox and Miller (2010), Women who dropped out of recruitment had significantly higher Body Mass Index (BMI's) than those who completed recruitment. Although these women's BMI's were higher, it is important to highlight that

these BMIs were still in the healthy range. This means that the sorority members in this study were not only not considering over-weight individuals, but also women who were not below or at the low end of the appropriate BMI for them. It is more accurate to say that there was a focus on the thin ideal (Rolnik, Engeln-Maddox & Miller, 2010).

Self-Esteem and Recruitment

Self-esteem is a topic rarely left out of any discussion of body dissatisfaction in young women. Self-esteem is affected depending on whether or not a student persists through the recruitment process. This is important because low self-esteem has been linked with those who engage in bulimic behaviors (Mintz & Betz, 1988). Those who complete recruitment successfully have higher self-esteem as a result in contrast with those who do not complete the process who are left with significantly decreased self-esteem (Chapman, Hirt & Spruill, 2008).

Another factor contributing to the impact on the self-esteem of a woman due to recruitment is the timing of the process. The majority of universities hold recruitment during the first few weeks of the school year. Others defer recruitment until the second semester while others start as early as one week before the first semester begins. First-year students constitute the majority of participants in sorority recruitment. Research suggests that students, both sorority and non-sorority members, have the lowest self-esteem during the first year in comparison to the other classes of students (Saville & Johnson, 2007). An early incidence of rejection in their first year may have a significant emotional impact (Keller & Hart, 1982). There is also evidence that a negative life event during the college years may contribute to poor self-esteem in students (Pettit & Joiner, 2001). It seems probable that an incidence of rejection this early in the college career of a student may be extremely detrimental to their self-esteem and intern their body image. There is also evidence that distress opens young women up to social influence, making them more susceptible to the norms of the women around them (Crandall, 1988). This makes the perpetuated thin-ideal becoming a norm for sororities even more detrimental to women just emerging from a possible distressing recruitment experience. Though women accepted through the recruitment process may have higher self-esteem immediately following recruitment, they may face struggles when entering the sorority. It has been suggested that membership can exacerbate the feelings of body shame. Body shame has been found to increase within one month of membership (Rolnik, Engeln-Maddox & Miller, 2010).

Sorority House Living

After completion of the recruitment process, women typically live in a sorority house during their sophomore or junior year in college. There is research to suggest this may amplify disordered eating and body dissatisfaction. Arthur (1999) says “living in close proximity to each other within the sorority house gave strength to the informal social control system and transferred the parent’s power to the sorority” (p. 90). Levine (2005)

claims that “Life in the dormitory or the fraternity or sorority house no doubt perpetuates and even intensifies that pattern of overreliance on peer approval. It may also serve to cultivate an overwhelming preoccupation with body image and sexual and chemical bodily excitation -- at times to the detriment of intellectual development and reality based reflection on the future” (p. 2). Sriegel-Moore, Silberstein and Rod (1986) agreed, stating that living on campus can increase the effect of the closed college feel where norms are created or amplified within the college setting. There may be other factors involved with body image disturbance in the housing setting as well such as the access to food choices. Women in sorority houses frequently have their own cook which makes them less likely to cook their own food (Kashubeck, Marchand-Martella, Neal & Larsen, 1997). This may prompt women to search for control over their food intake by other means such as starvation, over-exercising, vomiting and other unhealthy weight control methods. Another contributing factor could be that many of the women dress alike and share clothes (Arthur, 1999).

Comparisons in the Residential Setting

The body image disturbance within sorority living may be product of a few things. One could be due to comparisons made between women. Rubin, Nemerof and Russo (2004) found their study participants spoke about the importance of what those around them looked like in addition to their own self-image. They said there were left “feeling ugly, ashamed, or self-conscious of their appearance” (p. 31) after comparing their body to other women. Heinberg and Thompson (1991) found that women comparing themselves to other women (whether the comparison is made with someone who is thinner or larger) is detrimental to the body image of a college woman. They also suggested that comparisons can be more harmful if a woman is comparing themselves to someone who looks very similar to them. This will be a common occurrence in a sorority where members typically join where they see themselves. Arthur (1999) found that there were more similarities than differences between sorority women. Comparisons can quickly turn to talk in a residential setting which can be more dangerous for body satisfaction. A study by Arthur (1999) found that women admitted that talk of staying toned and thin dominated many of their conversations. It is suggested that hearing others speak negatively about their bodies that one may perceive as thinner than themselves is detrimental to their own body satisfaction (Ousley, Cordero & White, 2008).

Contrasting Findings

There are some studies that contradict the finding that sororities are at higher risk for body dissatisfaction. A study by Alexander (1998) found that sorority women did not report significantly more eating disorders or eating disordered behaviors than the control participants. Women in athletic teams and dance troupes are at a higher risk for disordered eating than sororities. Some research even extends to academic departments claiming that women in business, communications, dance, dietetics, and theatre have higher rates of body dissatisfaction (Withers Hansen, 2008). It also has been suggested

that being a sorority member brings on a sense of belonging which bolsters self-esteem making women less likely to experience body dissatisfaction (Larson, Retka & Williams, 2011). However, it seems that these findings are in the minority. The research also does not elaborate on the sorority members who also participate in athletics.

There are also mixed views about the effect of sorority housing on body dissatisfaction. Some studies show no relation to on-campus sorority house living and body dissatisfaction and claim that women in sororities experience no added pressure to control eating (Kashubeck, Marchand-Martella, Neal & Larsen, 1997). There also seems to be a positive side to sorority members living together in the area of prevention. Becker, Ciao, & Smith (2008) found it is easier to implement a program when women all live in one place and can continue to impact the decisions of their living mates in a positive way.

Analysis and Recommendations

Sororities and Body Image

The research showed focus on the thin ideal in all college women. Though men have become more focused on their body image in recent years, research shows that women are at a greater risk for body dissatisfaction than men. College provides a closed system which allows for the development of more exaggerated norms than the average population. This may make college women more susceptible to the pressures to be thin than the average population of women. Women entering college are in a crucial level of development. Some of the pressure to be thin comes from the new attention they are receiving from men. Research on the sexual objectification of women says that even admiring gazes can be harmful to a woman's self-image.

Sorority women are a subset of the general college female population, making them a logical point of concern for college administrators. Sorority members are at higher risk for body dissatisfaction because of their age and typically higher social class. In the sorority setting, body dissatisfaction can quickly turn to unhealthy weight control management strategies and eating disordered behaviors. The drinking culture in sororities contributes to the development of unhealthy weight control methods. Sorority members can use starvation as a method to off-set calories from alcohol or vomiting as a means to "undo" the damage the calories in the alcohol caused. Femininity is prevalent in sororities. Sororities often adopt traditional gender roles which includes an emphasis on women being thin. This adds to the pressure on sorority women. The sorority, like any other social system, can create norms within the organization different than the public. What is popular in any organization becomes what the popular members do and do not do. Research shows that first-year women are most susceptible to peer influence. This often causes new members to copy the unhealthy eating behaviors of current sorority members.

Living in a sorority house can cause challenges related to body image. These challenges come in a few forms. One is the social pressure in a sorority house. There tends to be an overreliance on peer approval when women are living among their peers in addition to eating, socializing and taking classes. In house living makes the closed college feel more apparent. Norms are created surrounding food in the house. Women model weight management strategies off the women they live with. Because sorority houses often employ a cook, the women do not have their own choice in food so they often look for other means to manage their weight in unhealthy ways. These strategies are then modeled by other women in the house.

Sorority Recruitment

The research shows that young women enter college with an established view of their body whether negative or positive. This view is developed through many avenues but most influential is the family of a young woman. From the research we can make the generalization that many women enter sororities with predisposed body dissatisfaction. This does not tell us whether women are more prone to join sororities if they are dissatisfied with their bodies or not. One study by Allison and Park (2003) addressed factors common in women choosing to participate in recruitment. They found no difference between those women who were interested in joining a sorority and those who were not. These results may not be generalizable because the study was done at a university with a large fraternity and sorority population.

The sorority recruitment process is stressful by nature. It is characterized by quick interactions based primarily on appearance. The pressure to be thin during the recruitment process is communicated through self-reports of women who have completed or been a part of the process. Self-esteem is essential to the discussion of body image because low self-esteem is correlated with body dissatisfaction. Self-esteem is greatly affected during the recruitment process. Women who complete the recruitment process and are placed in a sorority of their choice typically end with higher self-esteem. Those who are released from the process because of rejection typically end with much lower self-esteem. There is also a difference between those who persist in recruitment and those who do not persist. Women with higher Body Mass Indexes (BMI) are more likely to drop out of recruitment.

Recommendations

Sororities are valuable members of the university community. The goal of this research is not to remove fraternities and sororities from universities. Because sorority women make up a large part of the female population at many universities, it is important that fraternity and sorority life professionals pay attention to their needs. The conversation regarding health of sorority members is often dominated by alcohol use. I would suggest a turn of focus to body image concerns in women. One way to accomplish could be bringing in a program such as “The Dove Campaign for Real Beauty”. This program is “a corporate

project that claims to oppose restrictive feminine beauty standards and promote a more democratic vision of beauty” (Johnston & Taylor, 2008, p.941). This could shed some new light on what it means to be beautiful. It would also be beneficial for the sorority community to participate in body image related philanthropic activities. This may include putting on a program for young women in a local middle or high school.

Some researchers have claimed that women interested in sororities have predisposed characteristics. One of these characteristics includes body dissatisfaction. There is not enough research to make this claim. There needs to be more research on what aspects of sorority membership attracts women. However, one finding from the research says that a woman’s experiences prior to college are essential to their formation of body image. From this finding, I recommend that families be educated on the impact of the expressed opinions about body image have on their children.

Research suggests the strong need for more detailed research on the formal recruitment system. Recruitment should be altered so that women are able to have longer more meaningful interactions with each organization. Many multicultural organizations currently utilize a recruitment process characterized by a much longer interaction period before membership. Research on the effect of these programs on women would be beneficial to compare to formalized recruitment. It also important that there is an orientation to the recruitment process in which women are exposed to the potential risks of recruitment and other avenues to get involved on campus are discussed in case of rejection. “Bid day” at most universities is the day that includes the greatest number of rejections. It may be beneficial to have college counselors on site to talk to the women before they are sent away. It also would be beneficial for Resident Advisors to be made aware which of their students are participating in recruitment so that they can keep track of their emotional state throughout the process.

Sorority housing may create a pressured setting filled with comparisons and conversations about weight because it consists entirely of college women. However, having all of the women in one place could also be helpful to affect change. Research shows that peer led interventions can help to change unhealthy weight management behaviors. An organization could use the modeling between members as a positive aspect of sorority membership if an intervention could get the majority of members to practice healthy eating and exercise. It would also be beneficial for universities to hold an information or training session for both cooks and house directors of sorority homes encouraging the cooks to provide women with healthy eating options and educating the house directors on how to direct a person with a potential eating disorder to the proper help avenues.

Conclusion

Women are experiencing increasing pressure to be thin. This pressure is compounded when a woman enters college. The college environment is in ways isolated from society.

It is by nature competitive, and college women are surrounded by other young women in their prime of youth. This makes women in college at higher risk for body dissatisfaction than the average female population.

There is also a focus on the thin ideal in sororities. This pressure becomes greater for women in sororities. This happens for a few reasons. One is that sorority women are typically in a higher socioeconomic class because of their ability to pay for sorority expenses. Research has shown that higher socioeconomic status is a predictor of body dissatisfaction. There is also a large emphasis on traditional gender roles. Sorority women often subscribe to the traditional female gender role and spend more time on their appearance than women who choose not to subscribe to this role. Along with this traditional role comes an emphasis on being thin. The last factor contributing to this problem in sororities is that a sorority is by nature a social system, and like any other system, norms are created and exaggerated and women model their behaviors from those of their peers. Sorority women unknowingly work together to perpetuate the pressure to be thin and model eating habits from one another.

A topic of concern in this study was whether or not women with body dissatisfaction are attracted to sororities. From the research I can conclude that all women enter college with a body concept, either negative or positive, that has been developed primarily due to their family environment. There is not enough evidence to suggest that women with a negative body image are more likely than other women to join a sorority. The research also shows that recruitment has an effect on both self-esteem and body image. Whether that effect is positive or negative depends on whether or not a woman persists through the recruitment process. Women who are released from the process due to rejection from a sorority or multiple sororities experience lowered self-esteem which often causes body dissatisfaction.

The compilation of research on housing in sororities states that there is an increased amount of body dissatisfaction in a house with all women. When women live among their peers increases the need for peer approval. Sorority women often adopt unhealthy weight management techniques from the women they live with. Though this argument could also be made for an all women residence hall, I believe the pressure is increased because of the above conclusions about body dissatisfaction in sororities.

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