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Body Image, Sociocultural Influences and Self Esteem: The case of Cyprus

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Title:	Body Image, Sociocultural Influences and Self Esteem: The case of Cyprus
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Abstract:	Sociocultural influences and self-esteem have been found to have an impact on body image (Thompson et al., 2004; Argyrides, 2013). The internalization of the thin ideal by the media, the large emphasis on appearance placed by society and the unrealistic, distorted media images are just some of the long list of the sociocultural factors that have been assessed in the past. All these variables have also been assessed cross-culturally indicating some contradicting information between Western and Non-Western cultures (Bakhshi, 2011). The chapter focuses mainly on Cyprus, an island country in the Mediterranean Sea with 320 days of sunshine per year. Cyprus is of great interest in the literature concerning body image, self esteem and sociocultural issues if one takes into consideration four main factors: 1) There was a great boost of economic impact after the 1974 war and an emphasis was placed by the inhabitants on their social and body image (Katsounari, 2009) 2) there is a very warm weather in Cyprus which causes lighter, more revealing clothing to be worn (Sloan, 2002), therefore more emphasis placed on body image 3) the presence of significant increase in body image and self esteem concerns as compared to other countries and ethnicities (Argyrides, 2014; Katsounari, 2009) and 4) the minimal emphasis that is placed by the school curriculum on the above issues as the classes that address the issues have been reduced significantly (Ministry of Education, 2015). The chapter will focus on recent findings of a countrywide, large sample (N = 2664) of school-age and university-age males and females. Data were collected on sociocultural factors, body image factors and self esteem. Some findings reflect the literature on these constructs whereas other findings differ significantly from other northern and southern European countries (and other Western and Non-western countries). These findings are presented through the lens of the independent variables of gender, socioeconomic status, Body Mass Index category, age, and geographical location of one's upbringing. The chapter concludes with conclusions and recommendations not only for Cyprus, but also for similar demographic countries.

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