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"Girl, I Think My Butt Gettin' Big": The Importance of "Thickness" in Music Videos for Dutch Black and White Women's Body Image

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U.S. commercial women rappers often promote a "thick hourglass" body ideal in their music. This qualitative study, guided by social comparison theory and self-discrepancy theory, explores how 10 Black and 10 White Dutch women rap fans, aged 18–25, compared their actual body image with this ideal and the emotional consequences that result. A hybrid comparative thematic analysis revealed that both Black and White respondents view the thick ideal as dominant in women rap and part of Black culture. They consider it a standard of beauty and sexiness, when achieved naturally and not through plastic surgery. Comparing their actual body image to this ideal can evoke positive outcomes, such as body satisfaction and the motivation to work toward this ideal through exercise or by choosing clothing that better expresses it. However, it can also lead to negative body images and emotions, such as insecurity, especially when this ideal is perceived as difficult or impossible to attain, or when peers or family expect conformity to this ideal. For Black women, comparison to the thick ideal may result in more positive outcomes, and this ideal is more frequently endorsed by their social context compared with White women. These findings indicate that for rap fans, the Afrocentric thick ideal is more relevant than a Eurocentric thin ideal, highlighting the importance of developing healthy body interventions targeting gender and cultural and contextual beliefs. Further, this knowledge can increase practitioners' ability to integrate an influential media genre when working with young adults across different cultures.

Public Significance Statement

This study found that the Afrocentric thick hourglass body ideal in U.S. women rap music videos has both positive and negative consequences for Dutch Black and White women's body image. This study highlights the need for culturally relevant intervention programs to accurately tackle body image concerns in the context of global music consumption among diverse groups of (young) women.

Keywords: body image, rap music, ethnicity, social comparison theory, self-discrepancy theory

Supplemental materials: https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000788.supp

Hip-hop culture originated in the 1970s among Black and Brown communities in the Bronx, New York, as a form of escape from their socioeconomic challenges through "fun" activities such as parties and dance battles. The musical expression of hip-hop, rap, evolved into an art form that conveys political messages of resistance, empowerment, and change (Chang, 2007), but, today, its most commercialized form emphasizes the pursuit of wealth and dating and having sex with attractive women (Christenson et al., 2019). This commercialized U.S. rap has gained global popularity across diverse ethnic groups (e.g., Dankoor et al., 2023).

Although U.S. commercial rap is primarily considered a space controlled by Black men, the recent surge of Black women rap artists—those who trace their ancestry to West African diasporic communities, including Afro-Latina women—signifies a shift in

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gender dominance (Burns & Woods, 2019; Jennings, 2020). This new wave of women rappers frequently celebrates Afrocentric "thick hourglass" bodies in lyrics and videos. These body types, which contrast with the Eurocentric thin ideal prevalent in popular media, are characterized by large buttocks and thighs, big breasts, and round hips paired with a small waist and a flat stomach (e.g., Jennings, 2020; LaVoulle & Lewis Ellison, 2018).

A substantial body of research has demonstrated that images in popular media significantly shape consumers' attitudes, ideals, and behaviors (Ter Bogt et al., 2010; Ward, 2003). Furthermore, popular music media—particularly music videos—may set ideal body standards that adolescents and young adults use to compare and evaluate their actual bodies (Kistler et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2009). Body image is a critical component of clinical care, impacting both physical and mental components (Tolaymat & Moradi, 2011), but research in the music-related content and body image field has focused on the impact of the Eurocentric thin ideal on predominantly White girls and women's body image and health (e.g., Joiner et al., 2023; Kistler et al., 2010). To date, no study has explored the relationship between idealized thicker physiques in music media and women's actual body images. The aim of this study was, then, to explore whether the thick ideal portrayed in U.S. women rap music videos is recognized and deemed relevant as a comparison standard among young adult women rap fans, both Black and White. By including this last group, this study may challenge the assumptions in research and counseling that White women adhere solely to the Eurocentric thin ideal (Erchull, 2015).

U.S. Commercial Rap Videos and the Thick Hourglass Ideal

The thick hourglass ideal in U.S. commercial rap is often referred to as an African beauty standard; West African diasporic communities have always praised and desired such feminine shapes (e.g., Dickens & Stephens, 2024; Gentles-Peart, 2018; Hughes, 2021). This beauty standard made its entry in commercial rap in the late 1980s and has been glorified ever since (Burns & Woods, 2019; LaVoulle & Lewis Ellison, 2018; Parasecoli, 2007). The Miami bass scene, with men rap acts such as 2 Live Crew ("Big ol' booties"—Hoochie Mama, 1995), played a significant role in popularizing the so-called booty rap subgenre (Burns & Woods, 2019). In the mid-2000s, commercial rap from the South introduced strip club culture to this musical subgenre, further glorifying women's buttocks in videos. Black strip club dancers sometimes surgically enhance their buttocks to gain more notoriety; subsequently, this large-buttock look became part of the feminine body ideal in rap videos (M. Hunter, 2011; Romero, 2017).

Black woman rap artist Nicki Minaj, the most successful commercial woman rap artist from the mid-2000s to mid-2010s, centralized her thick body parts in her videos, with the camera angles focusing on her breasts, butt, and thighs (M. Hunter & Cuenca, 2017). Today's U.S. Black women rappers also place a large emphasis on thick bodies in their videos. In addition, some celebrate their natural curvy shapes in their lyrics, express their attraction to thick women or brag about their ability to get the financial means to surgically enhance their buttocks. For instance, in her song Body (2020), Megan Thee Stallion celebrates her natural body by rapping "That [body] ratio so out of control, that waist, that ass, them titties." Ice Spice uses a food wordplay to disclose how she got her natural thick body ("I am thick 'cause I be eatin' oats"—Princess Diana, 2023). Further, Cardi B expresses her sexual desire for thick hourglass women in her song Money (2018) by rapping "Bring a thottie [promiscuous woman] to the whip [car], If she fine or she thick, goddamn," and in the song All Dere (2024), GloRilla raps "Shawty [woman] thick as hell, shit, I might as well," disclosing her attraction to this body shape. Moreover, JT expresses her admiration for naturally shaped, curvy women through the lyric "make that [buttocks] clap so I know it's real" (JT Coming, 2024). Last, Latto's rap line "I'ma make him pay the second round of this BBL [Brazilian Butt Lift]," in the song Booty (2022), reveals that she both surgically enhanced her body and that she is able to persuade men to pay for this.

Women listeners, who have probably absorbed this ideal through U.S. men's rap and body-related messages from contemporary women rap, may have internalized this rap body ideal. Consequently, these women's comparisons of their own body with this ideal may impact their body image and related emotions. Social comparison theory (SCT; Festinger, 1954) and self-discrepancy theory (SDT; Higgins, 1987) are relevant sociopsychological frameworks for exploring and explaining this phenomenon.

Social Comparisons and Actual, Ideal, and Ought Body Images

Theories focusing on social comparison have a long-standing history in the social sciences. Festinger's (1954) SCT posits that people have a natural drive to actively compare themselves with relevant others to accurately evaluate themselves. Individuals may engage in *upward comparisons*, where they compare themselves with those they perceive as superior, or *downward comparisons*, where they compare themselves with individuals they believe to be inferior in certain domains (Wills, 1981). The relevancy of a comparison standard for self-evaluation purposes may depend on the self-domain the standard represents, similarity in goals or ideals, and demographic similarity (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity) between the individual and the standard (Dankoor et al., 2023; Festinger, 1954; Kang & Liu, 2019; Kistler et al., 2010; Lockwood & Kunda, 1997).

The domain of body appearance is believed to play an important role in the lives of (young) women as women's perceptions of their self-worth are partly based on their body shapes (Bailey et al., 2016). Thus, the portrayals of women's bodies in popular music, idealized by high-status artists, may represent important sources for social comparisons against which, especially fans, evaluate their own body appearance (Dankoor et al., 2023; Kistler et al., 2010). Such upward comparisons with music media standards are assumed to result in negative self-evaluations and emotions because they are likely to reveal discrepancies between one's perceived ideal body image and one's actual body image (Crusius et al., 2022; Festinger, 1954; Higgins, 1987; Kistler et al., 2010). Festinger's (1954) SCT also incorporates a motivational component. People may strive to emulate those they admire and aspire to attain a similar status or seek to surpass those they perceive as having a lower status (Wills, 1981).

Higgins' SDT (1987) builds upon Festinger's concepts but emphasizes the internal representations individuals hold about themselves and the expectations others have of them. In addition

to an *actual self* and an *ideal self*, they have an *ought self*, reflecting perceived external expectations. Higgins (1987) posited that conflicts between these self-states lead to emotional reactions. When there is a significant discrepancy between the ideal self and the actual self, individuals may experience feelings of disappointment, dissatisfaction, and sadness. Conversely, when there is a conflict between the actual self and the ought self, emotions such as anxiety and annoyance may arise because the self is perceived as not aligning with others' expectations. Like Festinger's (1954) theory, SDT also incorporates motivational components. Discrepancies between self-states can motivate individuals to develop their actual self in new directions that align with their ideals or others' expectations.

Besides upward and downward social comparison directions, another type of direction, *assimilative* or *contrastive*, may also determine individual outcomes. Figure 1 summarizes different outcomes. When one assimilates toward an upward ideal and believes one can attain similar successes, the individual may experience self-enhancement and the positive emotion of inspiration. Conversely, upward contrastive comparisons occur when an ideal standard may be deemed unattainable and result in negative actual body images and emotions (Crusius et al., 2022; Dankoor et al., 2023; Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). Similar positive and negative consequences may be present when the actual self is compared with the ought self. Assimilation may intensify positive emotions, and contrast may intensify negative ones.

SCT (1954) and SDT (1987) have provided valuable concepts for studying comparisons with media characters and their consequences, and these concepts have been used to study and explain how medialized ideals affect consumers. However, with a few exceptions (e.g., Dankoor et al., 2023; Milkie, 1999), these theoretical frameworks are rarely used in qualitative media research.

Media Comparisons and (Young) Black and White Women's Body Image

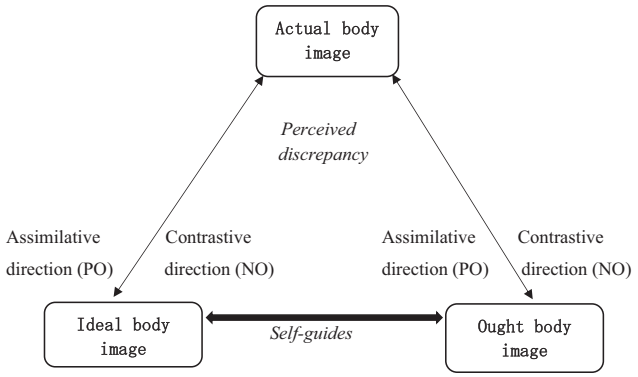
A substantial body of empirical research has demonstrated that media-driven body images affect girls and women. Studies on the impact of the Eurocentric thin ideal prevail in this field, generally concluding that conforming to this ideal may result in a range of negative consequences, including body dissatisfaction, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, social isolation, and, more broadly, a diminished quality of life (Huang et al., 2021). However, several studies have shown that (young) Black women are less likely to be affected by the thin mainstream ideal compared with (young) White women. For example, Milkie's (1999) interview-based study revealed that White American girls often view thin White magazine models as relevant comparison standards and believe that their men peers expect them to look like them, whereas Black American girls do not. Other U.S. survey and experimental studies confirmed that, in contrast to White women, Black women's actual body image may not be affected by portrayals of thin White media characters. Black women report that they simply do not consider these models relevant comparison standards (e.g., DeBraganza & Hausenblas, 2010; Schooler et al., 2004). However, other studies demonstrate that Black women can be affected by the thin standard if models are Black themselves. For instance, Zhang et al.'s (2009) survey study found that Black American college women with low ethnic identity may internalize the thin imagery in certain rap videos, resulting in poorer body image after comparisons.

A small body of work has included curvier or voluptuous media examples. For example, a comparative survey study suggests that Black women tend to favor non-White, curvier television characters, resulting in increased body surveillance after comparisons, while White women are more drawn to White, thin characters, which similarly heightens body surveillance (Greenwood & Dal Cin, 2012). The recent popularization of the voluptuous ideal in mainstream media by non-Black beauty influencers such as Kim Kardashian motivated McComb and Mills (2022a, 2022b) to include a "slim-thick" ideal in their research, consisting of a voluptuous shape with a small waist and flat stomach, making this ideal similar to the thick rap body ideal. Interestingly, their experimental results indicated that encouraging their ethnically diverse Canadian sample (including Black, White, and South Asian participants) to compare themselves with slim-thick ideals on Instagram led to worsened body image and weight satisfaction compared with exposure to the thin ideal (McComb & Mills, 2022a). These negative outcomes may be greater for women who are high on appearance perfectionism. In their subsequent experimental study (2022b), the researchers corroborated that exposure to the slim-thick ideal on Instagram leads to greater body dissatisfaction, increased disordered eating, and greater dietary constraint in comparison to exposure to the thin ideal.

Pressure to align to a more curvy, hourglass ideal may come not only from the media but from women's social environment as well. In that sense, both media body ideals and the ought body ideal provide standards. Capodilupo's (2015) survey study found that Black women may feel undervalued when they believe Black men compare their bodies with the hourglass physiques depicted in the media. Additionally, qualitative studies have highlighted the pressures Black women may experience due to perceived body ideals held by Black men (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014; Poran, 2006).

In summary, studies have shown that thick models can be perceived as relevant by both Black and White women, though some research suggests this is more pronounced among Black women. Comparing oneself with thick ideals in the media or with body images appreciated by one's social context may lead to concerns such as poorer body image and self-esteem and

Figure 1
Upward Social Body Comparisons and Outcomes



Note. P.O. = positive outcomes; N.O. = negative outcomes

weight concerns—effects closely resembling those associated with exposure to a thin ideal.

The Present Study

While a small body of research has explored the thick(er) ideal, no study has examined this ideal among the substantial group of rap fans—a highly popular music genre that propagates this body ideal through its artists and their work. It remains an open question whether rap consumers from the Netherlands perceive the thick hourglass body ideals portrayed in U.S. women rap videos as relevant and worth aspiring to. For Black women these rappers may be particularly salient due to their shared racialized background. However, being a fan implies a personal connection with an admired artist (Moyer-Gusé, 2008), and this connection can also apply to White fans. Therefore, in this study, we contrast the perceptions, evaluations, and narratives of the impact of the thick body ideal in rap among Black young adults with those of their White peers.

Both SCT (1954) and SDT (1987) emphasize the importance of others, or internalized representations of others, as comparison standards. Therefore, it is crucial to include the direct social context in studies of comparison (DiMaggio & Markus, 2010). In theoretical terms, this study aimed to compare the *actual body image* with the medialized *thick ideal body image*, as promoted in rap videos, and incorporated *the ought body image*, which represents the expectations and evaluations of close others. By exploring how individuals make sense of idealized Afrocentric thick body images and their impact on daily life, our study responds to the call for a culturally sensitive, qualitative approach within body image (and SCT) research (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014; Lowy et al., 2021; Poran, 2006).

Guided by the sensitizing concepts described before, we interviewed 10 Black, and 10 White women rap fans to address the following research questions: (1) How do young adult rap fans perceive and evaluate the body ideals presented in U.S. commercial women rap videos? (2) Are these ideals relevant for comparison with their actual body image? (3) If so, how do these ideals shape their actual body image and emotions elicited by this comparison? (4) How do representations of the expectations of others in their social context interact with their actual and idealized body image, and what emotions are elicited?

Method

Grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, our study posits that Black and White young women's understandings of idealized bodies in U.S. women rap videos are diverse and socially constructed yet allow for shared realities (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Interpretive qualitative designs are ideal for contextualizing and understanding these women's perspectives, experiences, behaviors, and the subjective meanings they attach to them. This approach is especially important for exploring traditionally marginalized populations and sensitive topics, including body image (e.g., Lowy et al., 2021; Poran, 2006). Further, our hybrid thematic data-analytic strategy allowed us to flexibly identify data-driven patterns (inductive) related to body ideals while validating existing sociopsychological theoretical frameworks (deductive) on the individual bodily outcomes of these ideals, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of our research topic (Xu & Zammit, 2020).

Research Team

Aligned with the interpretative qualitative research paradigm (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022), we recognize that researchers' positionalities—such as their backgrounds, experiences, and interests—shape their observations and interpretations throughout the research process. The first author, a Dutch Black (Surinamese) cisgender heterosexual woman, is a PhD candidate in the Netherlands under the supervision of the second and third authors. She has experience in qualitatively exploring the relationship between U.S. commercial rap consumption and self-images of young people in both the United States and the Netherlands, using sociopsychological theoretical frameworks. She is a rap music fan, is an interviewer in the hip-hop scene, and has a lived experience of negotiating Afrocentric body ideals in the context of rap. She was responsible for recruiting and interviewing participants, transcribing, analyzing the data, developing the major themes and storyline, and preparing the article. The second author is a Canadian Black cisgender heterosexual woman who is a full professor of psychology and health in the United States. She has expertise in qualitatively exploring the images of women in U.S. rap and the media's influences on health disparities among women of color. She was the first author's methodology advisor and assisted in article preparation. The third author, a Dutch White cisgender heterosexual man, assisted in data analysis and article preparation, including editing. He is a full professor of Interdisciplinary Social Science in the Netherlands and has experience in investigating pop music, youth culture, and sexuality among adolescents and emerging adults. The second and third authors occasionally enjoy U.S. rap music. The first author's insider status (Bukamal, 2022) may have enhanced the fidelity of the research, as an intimate understanding of a subject matter is believed to produce findings that accurately represent the studied phenomena (Levitt et al., 2021). To ensure trustworthiness throughout the research process, she kept an introspective, reflexive journal (Ahmed, 2024). This allowed her to reflect on her relationship with the participants and the research topic, actively engaging with ethical questions, personal experiences, biases, assumptions, and expectations regarding respondents' experiences. She regularly discussed her notes with the other authors, allowing for critical comments and input.

Participants

We followed Robinson's (2014) 4-point approach to sampling in interview-based psychology research: defining the sample universe (1), determining the sample size (2) and sample strategy (3), and recruiting the sample (4). First, our sample universe, or study population, consisted of 10 cisgender Dutch Black women and 10 cisgender Dutch White women living in the Netherlands. The Black respondents self-identified as Dutch Black from Creole Surinamese descent, with Suriname being a former Dutch colony. The White participants self-identified as Dutch and ethnically White. Second, the sample size (n = 20) was determined by the "information power" this carefully defined sample holds, based on specific characteristics and experiences of the participants (Malterud et al., 2016). Third, we employed a purposive intensity sampling strategy (Robinson, 2014) to specifically target young adult women who

experience personal connections to U.S. commercial rap and its women artists. Other inclusion criteria were women who were between 18 and 25 years old (M_{age} = 21.95, SD = 2.18) and experience the following personal connections: (a) liking the genre of rap and its women characters, (b) wishful identification (desire to be like the women characters), (c) perceived similarity (feeling a similarity with a woman character), and (d) parasocial relationships (a one-sided intimate relationship with a woman character). These four constructs were drawn from empirical popular music studies (e.g., Kistler et al., 2010) and Moyer-Gusé's (2008) review of involvement with entertainment characters. All participants preferred and listened to rap (liking genre). Additionally, most respondents found the women rap artists attractive women (liking characters), were inspired by the confidence of these characters (wishful identification), felt that the characters understood what they were experiencing as women trying to build a career and find a loving partner (perceived similarity), and followed their favorite women rap characters on social media (parasocial relationship). The respondents lived in various cities across the Netherlands and had diverse educational backgrounds and sexual orientations (see Supplemental Materials, Table 1, for additional demographic information). The primary investigator created pseudonyms to identify participants' comments and protect their confidentiality.

Procedure

To craft this sample carefully, the primary investigator recruited participants at hip-hop events in the Netherlands and via snowball sampling (Robinson, 2014). Recruitment fliers invited respondents who considered themselves fans of U.S. rap to reflect on the body ideals in current U.S. commercial women rap. An initial phone or face-to-face screening was conducted to verify their eligibility based on their involvement with U.S. commercial rap. The following questions were asked: "What musical genre do you prefer? Why?" "Who are your favorite commercial women artists? Why?" "Do you follow them on social media?" These involvement questions were adapted from previous popular music media studies (e.g., Dankoor et al., 2023; Kistler et al., 2010). Before the interviews, the participants were asked to provide informed consent, and after completion, the participant received a €5 gift card. The interviews were conducted in environments where the respondents felt comfortable, such as local coffee bars, their homes, workplaces, or community centers. The last interview was conducted via Zoom because the primary investigator was in the United States at that time. All interviews were conducted by the investigator, between August 2022 and February 2023, and lasted between 45 and 80 min (average 50 min). Interviews were carried out in the native languages of the participants, and all were later translated into English to be able to publish quotes.

The semistructured interview guide, created by the primary investigator, consisted of 27 questions and five probing questions. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the questions, the interview guide was piloted with one Black and one White woman to assess the suitability of the questions and the interview skills of the investigator. After receiving minor feedback from the pilot interviews, the investigator made a few changes in the wording of the questions (e.g., more frequently using the words "rap body standards" and "rapper body"). At the beginning of each interview, the investigator repeated the four involvement questions from the screening, along with two additional questions (e.g., "What is your opinion about the physical appearances of women rap artists?") to further verify their connections with rap and the women artists. Participants were then asked to describe the bodily appearances of U.S. commercial women rap artists, with the term "commercial" explained to provide clarification. The following four questions assessed their opinions about these body shapes and the bodily representations in other popular media (e.g., "What is your opinion on such body representations in rap music?" "And body representations in broader popular media?"). Subsequently, she posed 12 questions related to social comparisons and actual and ought body images, using Festinger's (1954) and Higgins' (1987) theories on bodily selves, comparisons, and self-discrepancies as a guide. Examples of these questions are as follows: "To what extent do you think you meet the 'rap body standard'?" "Why/Why not?" "How does that make you feel?" "Do you think that other people in your environment (e.g., family, friends, romantic/sexual partners) consider the rapper body as the ideal body shape for women?" "Do you think they also expect from you to live up to that rap body standard?" "How does that make you feel?" The final four questions further zoomed in on perceived cultural ideals (e.g., "To what extent is the rap body ideal part of mainstream culture—popular culture/different media—etc.?"). Probing questions ("Can you give a few examples of rap artists, songs, music videos?" "Why is that good or bad for women? For Black women? For U.S. women? For Dutch women?") were asked to obtain further information if the initial answers were unclear or incomprehensive. The investigator summarized the respondents' answers after each question to make sure there were no misunderstandings.

To further enhance the relevance of this research, the primary investigator used multiple credibility checks. First, she sought to address potential social desirability bias and self-censoring by informing participants that she heard a wide range of views and emotions from other participants. This may have encouraged them to speak openly and honestly (Jiménez & Orozco, 2021). Second, after the interviews, respondents were given the opportunity to ask questions and share additional thoughts. This created space for disclosing information that was not shared before (Creswell, 2013). Third, member checking ensured that the respondents were the experts of their experiences. McKim's (2023) structural approach to member checking was utilized (e.g., How accurately do you feel the findings captured your thoughts/experiences?) after the findings were written in English. The investigator was able to member check five Black and five White respondents by phone. One respondent asked for a minor adjustment ("I want to feel how it is to be thick" instead of "I wish to be thick"). Last, the investigator presented herself as a Dutch Black rap fan (insider status), which may have helped participants to discuss rap-related issues comfortably (Bukamal, 2022).

Hybrid Comparative Thematic Analysis

The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim with the help of a Dutch commercial transcription service. The primary investigator repeatedly reviewed the audio files alongside the written transcripts. The analyzed data included the actual text (statements made by the participants) and the field notes of the investigator. These multiple data sources were collected to triangulate the data, enhancing the credibility of the findings and

reducing potential bias from one data source (Ahmed, 2024). A hybrid comparative thematic analysis, which involved a deductive and inductive approach to coding (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Xu & Zammit, 2020), was conducted to identify themes among the responses of Black and White rap consumers. The two deductive category manuals (one for the Black respondents and one for the White participants) consist of a table with the a priori categories based on the research questions and Festinger's (1954) SCT and Higgins' (1987) SDT (rap body ideals, ideal body image, actual body image, ought body image).

The investigator adapted Braun and Clarke's (2006) self-reflexive six-step framework for conducting thematic analysis in psychology. She reread the transcripts and notes several times to familiarize herself with the data and produced an initial list of interesting evidence (1), and then she attached descriptive in vivo codes (e.g., "tiny waist," "thick but natural") to the manuals and searched for inductive semantic themes related to body ideals (2 and 3). The resulting main theme and subthemes (at least a 60% agreement among Black and White participants) in the two manuals were compared for similarities and differences. Coding reliability was ensured by following Braun and Clarke's (2022) flexible and reflexive approach to thematic analysis; the third author cross-checked the codes to demonstrate rigor by comparing the raw data with the codes in the deductive manuals. After a month of distancing and reflecting, the investigator and third author discussed their findings during a coding meeting. With no disagreements, both immersed themselves in the data for interpretative depth and met a week later to double check their findings. Intercoder agreement was established, again, during this second meeting. They both engaged in self-reflexive memoing throughout this process to critically reflect on their positionalities and ideas.

In the fourth and fifth stages, the final theme and subthemes were reviewed and refined. The third author verified the themes by comparing the coded data extracts to the themes. There was a minor disagreement about the naming of the first subtheme (i.e., Should we name it "plastic surgery is wrong" or "plastic surgery is a bad decision"?). Both authors engaged with the coded data more deeply, and an agreement was attained during their third meeting. The final "body ideal themes" reached internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. These themes formed the basis for analyzing the respondents' body images and emotions. Theme saturation was assessed using a comparative method for theme saturation (CoMeTS; Constantinou et al., 2017), which is especially useful for hybrid thematic analyses. The themes in each new interview were compared with the themes in previous ones, that is, identifying shared and new themes. After four interviews among Black respondents and six among White participants, saturation was reached as no new themes relating to body ideals in rap were identified. However, 20 interviews were held to utilize the respondents' "information power" (Malterud et al., 2016) to explore the relationship between rap body ideals and women's body images. In the final sixth phase, the Results section was written. The investigator translated participants' views into English, and the third author translated them back to Dutch. The investigator then checked the translations for accuracy. The thick descriptions of the data demonstrate this study's groundedness (Levitt et al., 2021). Finally, we adhered to Onwuegbuzie et al.'s (2009) recommendation for qualitative researchers to report the number of respondents who have similar viewpoints and experiences (microinterlocutor analysis).

Transparency and Openness

We reported how we determined our sample size, and we followed JARS-Qual, as proposed by Levitt et al. (2018). All data are available upon request. This study's design and its analysis were not preregistered.

Results

One main body ideal theme and two accompanying subthemes related to Research Question 1, which addresses the body ideals portrayed in U.S. women's rap and respondents' evaluations, were identified. Table 1 presents an overview of these themes, example quotes, and the themes' frequencies. The main theme, "attractive women are naturally thick," explains the type of "rap bodies" the respondents found appealing. Participants' views on surgical procedures to attain a thick hourglass physique are discussed in the first subtheme, "plastic surgery is a bad decision." The second subtheme "thickness is a Black cultural body ideal" highlights respondents' perspectives on the cultural component of desired thickness. Thereafter, the participants' actual and ought body image in the context of the body ideal in women rap videos, along with their experiences and emotions, are presented.

Main Theme: Attractive Women Are Naturally Thick

In common with our conceptualization of the rap body ideal, our respondents described the average woman rap artist as thick ("big titties" [Bianca, Black], "big booty" [Diana, Black], "wide hips" [Floortje, White], "beautiful full thighs" [Aya, Black]) but with "literally a small waist" (Francis, Black) and a "flat stomach" (Anne, White). In this part of the conversation, the participants' negative attitudes toward plastic surgery first became salient. Most of the respondents (nine Black and nine White) thought that the thick rap body ideal is beautiful and sexually attractive as long as it is natural. For example, the following comments were made: "I love thickness, but it has to be natural, because small chicken legs with a huge ass, nah, that looks ridiculous" (Bianca, Black); "I think it is really beautiful. Really beautiful. A flat stomach and the rest big, that is ideal … but natural though" (Anne, White); "Yeah, when I find a woman attractive, uhm, I would find a woman like that attractive. A specific type of femininity. Curves are more sensual … but those extreme ones [surgically enhanced] I do not agree with" (Dasha, White); "It's just beautiful. It looks very feminine and sexy … but I am not a fan of BBL's" (Claudia, Black).

The two women who rejected the thick hourglass ideal had differing reasons for doing so. For Eve (Black) the curves are "way too much" as she preferred slimmer bodies. Floortje (White) revealed that she could not "connect" with this idealized body type because she does not have the same racialized background as the Black women artists.

Subtheme 1: Plastic Surgery Is a Bad Decision

In addition to their perceptions of the level of attractiveness (e.g., "Natural is way more attractive" [Gina, Black]; "It [BBL] then becomes some type of caricature" [Connie, White]), participants shared other reasons during the interviews as to why they believe plastic surgery is a bad decision. Explanations included lack of self-love, fueling insecurities, health dangers, and self-sexualization.

Table 1
Description and Frequencies of Body Ideal Themes

Theme	Description	Frequency *n* (%)	Example quote
Main theme: Attractive women are naturally thick	Words or phrases that describe preferred body types	18 (90)	"Yeaaahhh, I think it [thickness] is really beautiful. … I am not into fake bodies, though. It should be impressive, but it looks ridiculous." (Aya, B) "I like, you know, curves, but it [body] has to be real. Yeah, I think it [a natural thick body] is an attractive body type." (Irene, W)
Subtheme 1: Plastic surgery is a bad decision	Words or phrases that describe attitudes toward plastic surgery to attain a thick physique	19 (95)	"You need to love your body no matter how it looks. You will probably never be satisfied … and then you go from BBL [Brazilian Butt Lift] to BBL and you end up looking like all the other girls with a BBL." (Gina, B) "I think those surgeries create unrealistic expectations for women." (Gaby, W)
Subtheme 2: Thickness is a Black cultural body ideal	Words or phrases that describe perceived cultural body ideals	17 (85)	"I think it's a Black thing. African Americans, Africans… they all like that super feminine [thick] body." (Francis, B) "It's definitely a cultural thing. Every man I dated was like 'What, how can you have [a big] ass and you are a White girl?'" (Ellen, W)

Note. B = Black woman, W = White woman.

Half of the participants (four Black and six White) thought that undergoing plastic surgery conceals a deeper problem, namely, the lack of confidence and self-love ("Those women are already insecure and a BBL won't help them. They should work on themselves. Like some type of process of self-love" Jacinta, Black). Connie (White) talked about the concept of "body neutrality." She explained that assessing your body on the basis of *what it can do* instead of *how it looks* will change the relationship women have with their bodies and may lead to "more confidence." Gaby (White), Aya (Black), and Claudia (Black) made similar comments. Several respondents (four Black and two White) believed that some U.S. Black women rap artists are complicit in creating unrealistic expectations of women's bodies, thereby fueling insecurities among girls and women. Diana (Black) said: "They [rap artists with BBL's] give young girls the feeling that they cannot wear certain things and twerk [dance with the hips and buttocks] in the club because their butt is not big enough." A few participants (one Black and two White) expressed concerns about women's health. They thought that normalizing cosmetic surgeries potentially put the lives of women at risk. As Connie (White) succinctly explained:

> I think it is just a very dangerous message [cosmetic surgery is normal]. Not only mentally, but also medically … you know when we are all normalizing it. … This will sound dramatic, but there will be deaths. Women will die trying to look better.

Finally, Floortje (White), the young woman who could not identify with the thick ideal, linked breast and buttock enhancements to "self-sexualization" which, in her mind, make plastic surgeries not beneficial for women. She stated: "If you already have it, okay. But it made me angry when Princess Nokia [U.S. Afro-Latina artist] got bigger boobs. Now she also wants to be a sex object. Why would you do that to yourself?" The one participant who did not think plastic surgery is a bad decision, Eve (Black), believed that women should undergo surgery "if it makes them feel better."

Subtheme 2: Thickness Is a Black Cultural Body Ideal

When the interviewer asked whether the thick hourglass ideal portrayed in women rap videos has a cultural component, 17 participants (nine Black and eight White) thought that this ideal is connected to Black culture. Bianca (Black) was the only respondent who attributed this perceived Black cultural ideal to influences outside of Black communities. She asserted that the beauty industry (re)produces differences between Black and White body standards: "It just seems that Black models cannot be thin. They are really pushing the curvy thing on us." For three other Black respondents, conversations with family members led them to believe that a thicker body type is ideal within Black cultures, as these family members encouraged them to eat more to gain weight (e.g., "My aunts then say: 'What happened to your butt? You need some more meat on your bones!'"—Diana, Black). Most Black participants (five) explained their beliefs about the cultural aspect of thickness by referencing the body shapes of other Black women. For instance, Gina (B) said: "My aunts in Suriname are just thicker, rounder, more beautiful and that is really being celebrated in Suriname."

Most White respondents also referenced Black women's bodies. For example, Anne (White) disclosed: "In general, African American

women just have more body [are thicker].” A few White respondents (two) connected thickness to Black culture because they felt that men react surprisingly when they see their curvy bodies. As Dasha (White) shared: “On Tinder [dating app] men are like ‘how did you get that body? It’s exotic!’” For one participant, Irene (White), preferences of Black men suggested that this body ideal has a cultural component (“Correct me if I am wrong, but I think that Black men find curves beautiful”).

The three respondents (one Black and two White) who did not think that thickness is cultural believed that it now has become popular among people with diverse ethnic cultural backgrounds. However, they also noted that popular influencer Kim Kardashian may have had a breast and buttock reduction in 2022 which, for them, signals that beauty ideals in mainstream popular culture are “trend sensitive” (Floortje, White).

Black Women’s Body Images and the Thick Hourglass Ideal in Rap Videos

Research Questions 2 and 3 regarded U.S. Black women rap artists’ body shapes as relevant for comparison to one’s own body shape and the emotional impact of this comparison. Nine of the 10 young adult Black women considered thick hourglass rap artists relevant comparison standards for self-evaluation purposes as they embody their ideal. Upward comparisons with these idealized shapes resulted in both positive and negative actual body images and emotions. Six of the nine women revealed that they sometimes experience positive actual body images or emotions, such as the motivation to work out, when they watch women rap videos. What seems to connect this group of respondents is their belief that there are a few similarities between their bodies and the thick hourglass figures portrayed in videos. For instance, the following comments were made: “I do not have that exact body, but I do have some curves” (Gina). “I do have thunder thighs and a little booty” (Francis). “I do have somewhat of a shape. Kind of like Rubi Rose [U.S. Black rap artist]” (Claudia). “I am not that thick, but I do have a visible Black body [curvy]” (Aya). It could be that during these instances of assimilation (emphasizing the similarities) the women believed that such thick hourglass bodies are somewhat attainable, which motivates them to work on their shapes. For example, Claudia, Hilly, and Jacinta disclosed: “It also can be a good thing. It motivates you to get your ass up and go to the gym. I am trying to find a way to become thick in a healthy way” (Claudia). “I don’t want a BBL, but it does make you want to do extra squats [buttocks exercises] in the gym (Hilly),” “Sometimes I look up workout plans on the internet after I watched rap videos” (Jacinta).

However, all nine respondents experienced negative actual body images and emotions such as insecurity, frustration, and jealousy. Six participants experiencing a mix of both positive and negative consequences illustrate the complexity of social comparison processes. The negative outcomes appear to be attributable to the contrastive comparisons (emphasizing the differences) these nine participants engaged in. The following comments were made: “Sometimes I wish I had a big booty like that” (Diana), “I am never going to look like that. That frustrates me sometimes” (Aya), and “I do get jealous when I look at my body and then see their [natural] bodies” (Jacinta). Furthermore, some of the women explained how they believed that they do not look as good as the natural thicker women rap artists in certain clothes. For instance, Gina said: “I doubt my body for a few seconds and think to myself: ‘If I had that type of body I could wear that.’” Moreover, Jacinta shared: “It [pants] just does not look cute with my skinny legs.” A few of these women also revealed that they contemplated undergoing a BBL surgery at some points in their lives but that the “fakeness” of it bothered them too much. As Bianca said: “Maybe I should save money for a BBL. But then again, it’s just so fake and I don’t like fake.”

Research Question 4 explores how participants’ perceptions of others’ expectations interact with their actual body image and ideal body image. All respondents indicated that their social context expects them to have a rapper body. Perceived discrepancies between their actual body image and this ought body image (rapper body) contributed to negative emotions of insecurity and worry as these comparisons also contrasted away from the standard. Most participants talked about their ought body image in the context of (heterosexual) romantic relationships. For example, Aya said: “My best friend is thicker and sometimes I do wonder if some guys are more interested in her because of that. I am not jealous but more so like I want to feel how it is to be thicker.” Hilly revealed: “Sometimes I worry about getting a boyfriend. Maybe I cannot get one, because I am not curvy enough.” In addition, Jacinta shared: “They [men] all want a super thick trophy wife now, we [slimmer women] need love too haha.” A few respondents revealed that some women friends’ expectations made them more insecure (e.g., “It seems that my friends also think that an attractive Black woman has a rapper body. That makes me question the way I look even more”—Inez).

All nine respondents discussed how they have dealt with these negative emotions resulting from perceived discrepancies between their actual body image and ideal and ought body image. Many women noticed that, as they aged, they developed a greater acceptance of their bodies. For instance, Claudia shared: “I used to wear extra leggings so my thighs would not look so thin. You are more sensitive when you are younger, I care less now and shake my little ass … just like a snake bean [Surinamese vegetable] haha.” Realizing that all bodies are beautiful also came with aging (e.g., “all booties matter haha”—Diana). Others shared how receiving compliments from family members and peers also helps their process of self-acceptance (“My mom always tells me how beautiful I am” [Inez] and “Sometimes I hear I have an Aaliyah [Black R&B singer from the 90s] body [slimmer] and that makes me feel good” [Aya]). Just as a primary focus on what your body can do instead of how it looks is helpful. Aya further commented: “I just like it when my body does what it needs to do.” A few respondents disclosed that unfollowing thick Black women rap artists on social media also helps reduce negative outcomes, as they believe it decreases their pursuit of unrealistic standards. Gina said: “I filter what I *do* see … and what is realistic for me.” Furthermore, a few participants revealed that choosing clothing to “snatch” [accentuate] their curves (Jacinta) or to avoid looking “like a square” (Bianca) made them feel better about themselves. Last, Francis shared that discovering some of the bodies she had idealized were actually fake also decreased her negative attitudes toward her own body. She commented:

> Some are blessed with a natural [thick] body. But when I found out that some rappers and women I know got BBL’s, I realized that there is more to it. I don’t have to keep thinking: “Why do I not have a body like that?”

White Women's Body Images and the Thick Hourglass Ideal in Rap Videos

Pertaining to Research Questions 2 and 3, as in the Black sample, nine out of 10 young adult White women considered thick U.S. Black women rap artists as relevant comparison standards for self-evaluation purposes. Just as in the cases of their Black peers, upward comparisons with the thick hourglass bodies led to both positive and negative outcomes. Three respondents engaged in assimilative comparisons with the rap artists, which led to positive actual body images and emotions. For instance, Ellen commented: "I do have a proportioned body. Smaller waist, wider hips … ass. I like that. I would be intimated if I did not have this type of body." Another woman, Dasha, said: "I do have a body similar to those in the videos and that makes me more confident. … My mom and grandma always want to be thin so I always felt different because of my body." She further added: "Compliments also make me feel good, but it is weird that some people fetishize curvy women who are not fat." One other participant, Connie, experienced the positive emotion of motivation while watching the thick women artists and engaging in assimilative comparisons. She stated: "I then think: 'Aah, I want to work out too. Fun! Train my butt and abs. I do already have some curves."

Negative actual body image and emotions were experienced by seven respondents, including Connie. Their contrastive comparisons led to these negative outcomes. For example, Babs said: "I thought for the longest time: 'Oh, that's really not nice. I don't fit that image [thick hourglass] at all' … Sometimes I still want bigger boobs and more ass." In addition, Jenny commented: "Sometimes I do have thoughts of insecurity when I see those [curvy] bodies with flat stomachs and skinny facial features." A few other respondents talked about their body image in the context of going out. For instance, Gaby disclosed: "I think that it [not having a rapper body] unconsciously still bothers me sometimes. When I go out, I try to create that snatched body shape with my clothes." She continues: "It [insecurity] comes and goes. There are good days, 'are my thighs thicker?', and bad days. On the worst days I sometimes wonder; 'Would I change something on my body if I had the money?'" Furthermore, Irene revealed that she feels insecure at times because her current body is less similar to the thick hourglass shape than the body she had a few years ago.

Pertaining to Research Question 4, one woman, Gaby, believed that her peers expect her to have a rapper body, which intensified her negative emotions. Actual and ought body image discrepancies led to emotions of pressure. She stated: "Yeah, I do feel [outside] pressure to look as similar as those [rap] women." Interestingly, fewer White participants than Black respondents considered the concept of the ought body image relevant in their daily life experiences. The other six respondents did not think that people in their environment expect them to have a thick hourglass physique due to their racialized background. For instance, Heleen said: "I feel less pressure because I am a little bit different. There is not the same expectation for White women."

The seven White respondents experiencing negative outcomes, resulting from discrepancies between actual body image and ideal and ought body images, dealt with them by prioritizing self-love and acceptance, unfollowing thick U.S. Black women rap artists, and making certain clothing choices. These (coping) mechanisms are similar to those of their Black peers. Three participants revealed that getting older has helped them develop a stronger love for their own bodies, making them less vulnerable to the impact of the rap body ideal. For example, Anne said: "If I was younger those images would have bothered me more. Now I am learning to love my body." Receiving compliments from partners (e.g., "I don't think I fit that ideal but I feel better when, uhm, maybe too much information haha, my 'special friend' adores my body during back shots [sexual act]"—Gaby) and adopting the concept of body neutrality (e.g., "It is a choice. And I am choosing to love my body because it can do a lot for me. Other thoughts are not serving me"—Connie) also helped some respondents in their self-love journey. A few women disclosed that by limiting their exposure to naturally thick U.S. Black women rap artists and paying more attention to women with similar body shapes, they experienced fewer negative consequences on their actual body image and emotions. For example, Babs commented:

> I started following this influencer on Instagram because we have the same body type. Her style inspires me. I can try to throw on a cute Megan [U.S. Black woman rap artist] costume but I would just look ridiculous haha. So, I met her [influencer] a few months ago at Lowlands [festival] and I told her that her outfits inspire me and that she makes me feel better about my body.

Finally, just like Gaby, Irene shared that wearing clothes that accentuate her curves "to kind of get that hourglass body" improves her attitudes toward her own body.

Discussion

This study aimed to qualitatively explore how young adult Dutch Black and White women perceive the body ideals in U.S. commercial women rap videos and whether these inform their actual and ideal body image and associated emotions. It further contrasted their actual body image with an ought image representing expectations from the social environment.

Our first research question pertained to the question how young adult women rap fans perceive and evaluate the body ideals presented in these women rap videos. The respondents' readings of the body ideals coincided with our conceptualization (e.g., M. Hunter & Cuenca, 2017; LaVoulle & Lewis Ellison, 2018): All 20 participants believed that the average U.S. Black woman rap artist has big breasts and thighs, and a large butt, with a small waist and flat stomach. Most women endorsed this thick hourglass ideal. They stated that *attractive women are naturally thick* (main theme), followed with *plastic surgery is a bad decision* (subtheme) and *thickness is a Black cultural body ideal* (subtheme).

Our second and third research questions asked whether this ideal was relevant for self-evaluation purposes and how the thick ideal shaped their actual body image and the emotions elicited by these comparisons. Results show that for nearly all of the Black and White women in this study that was the case. Among both Black and White women, comparing their own body profiles with the thick ideal can evoke positive emotions, such as body satisfaction, pride, and the motivation to work toward this ideal through exercise. The narratives of our respondents seem to indicate that for Black women, comparison to the thick ideal more often results in positive emotions compared with White women. Comparison with thick ideals can also lead to negative emotions such as insecurity, frustration, and jealousy, particularly when the ideal is difficult or impossible to attain. Respondents from both

groups revealed that several strategies helped reduce negative outcomes. These strategies included learning to love themselves and their bodies, adopting a body neutrality perspective, that is, viewing the body in terms of its potential for activity rather than its shape (Alleva & Tylka, 2021), unfollowing certain thick hourglass artists on social media, and choosing clothes that accentuate their curves.

A fourth question regarded the way in which representations of the expectations of others in their social context interact with their actual and idealized body image. Compared with White respondents, Black respondents more often noted that the thick ideal was reinforced by their social context and that partners, friends, and family subtly or directly expected conformity to this norm. In other words, the ought ideal was particularly relevant for these respondents. Discrepancies between their actual body image and the ought body image led to negative outcomes, such as shape concerns and emotions of worry. On a more general note, our findings indicate that for fans of popular rap music, both Black and White, the Afrocentric thick ideal may hold more relevance than the Eurocentric thin ideal. In the remainder of this section, we discuss body ideals and social comparison processes in more detail.

Body Ideals

We anticipated that the Black respondents would be more likely than their White peers to endorse the thick hourglass ideal in women rap videos. To our surprise, both Black and White participants accepted this body ideal; nine out of 10 Black women endorsed it, and the same ratio was present among our White respondents. The young White women's endorsement of the idea that *attractive women are naturally thick* contrasts with previous quantitative comparative studies that found that Black women prefer thick(er) bodies more than their White peers (e.g., E. A. Hunter et al., 2021; Overstreet et al., 2010). Our results suggest that involvement with U.S. commercial women rap is a more important factor in the endorsement of this ideal than one's racialized background. More research on rap involvement, fandom, and individual outcomes is necessary to corroborate this claim. Interestingly, Canadian experimental studies (McComb & Mills, 2022a, 2022b) showed that White women may also idealize a thick hourglass physique. These contrastive findings call for more research among ethnically diverse women within and without the context of rap culture. Furthermore, some of the respondents made comments specifically relating to the women rap artists' sexual attractiveness. They believe that thick hourglass women are sexy and feminine. Their comments align with previous studies rooted in an evolutionary perspective reporting that a woman's (narrow) waist and curves may be related to a woman's perceived sex appeal (Gallup & Frederick, 2010).

Within the subtheme of *plastic surgery is a bad decision*, there was a strong consensus among the participants (nine Black and 10 White women). In addition to finding "fake bodies" less attractive, the respondents mentioned reasons such as sending a wrong message to (young) women, concealing deeper issues, such as insecurity, and health dangers as to why they feel plastic surgery is a bad decision. A previous survey study among (predominantly White) Australian women found that exposure to cosmetic surgery in the media may result in more favorable attitudes toward such procedures (Sharp et al., 2014). This is not the case in our study. The women's involvement with a music genre that also celebrates surgically enhanced thick bodies did not make them more accepting. It must be noted, though, that our qualitative sample was small and generalizations to larger groups are difficult.

The last subtheme, *thickness is a Black cultural body ideal*, illustrates that most of the respondents (nine Black and eight White) tied thickness to West African diasporic communities. Both groups of women referred to (mythical) examples of curvy Black women to support their argument. They also shared their daily life experiences. Black women reported that the thick ideal is normative in their social environment. For example, they noted that particularly family members sometimes encouraged them to gain weight through eating to not get "too thin." Our result regarding the Black respondents' experiences with family, food, and weight corresponds with E. A. Hunter et al.'s (2017) mixed-method study among specifically African American women and Capodilupo and Kim' (2014) qualitative study among Black women living in the United States. Furthermore, a few White participants reported that men in their social circles were surprised when they saw their thick hourglass shapes, implying that this is not a norm that is taken for granted. To conclude, just as other qualitative and quantitative studies, we found evidence that body ideals can be perceived as either Afrocentric or Eurocentric (e.g., Capodilupo, 2015; Capodilupo & Kim, 2014; Gentles-Peart, 2018; Hughes, 2021; E. A. Hunter et al., 2017).

Social Comparisons and Actual, Ideal, and Ought Body Images

The identified body ideal themes formed the basis for analyzing the respondents' body images and emotions. As 18 (nine Black and nine White) of the 20 participants endorsed the natural thick hourglass bodies in U.S. commercial women rap videos, its characters were relevant comparison standards for self-evaluation purposes for the majority of the women in our study. The two respondents who did not consider the thick hourglass shapes of women rap artists as relevant standards for self-evaluation stated either that these women's bodies did not align with their ideal physiques (Eve, Black) or that their ethnicity shielded them from feeling the need to idealize such bodies (Floortje, White).

Respondents who viewed the natural thick bodies in women rap videos as relevant and ideal experienced both positive and negative outcomes after upward comparisons, highlighting the complexity of social comparison processes. Half of these participants (six Black and three White) experienced positive actual body images and emotions (i.e., pride, confidence, and motivation). This may be due to engaging in assimilative comparisons, emphasizing the similarities between their body features, such as curves and big thighs, and those of the U.S. Black women rap artists. Furthermore, some women's motivation to narrow the gap between their bodies and these rapper bodies (e.g., by going to the gym) supports Festinger's (1954) and Higgins' (1987) theories, suggesting that upward comparisons can drive efforts to reduce discrepancies. Additionally, our respondents' perception of the attainability of thick hourglass bodies aligns with previous Dutch and Canadian qualitative and experimental SCT studies (Dankoor et al., 2023; Lockwood & Kunda, 1997; Veldhuis et al., 2017), which show that seeing internalized ideals as attainable can lead to positive affective responses. Finally,

these results contribute to the literature on media body comparisons and motives (e.g., Veldhuis et al., 2017), indicating that women rap consumers may use upward comparisons with thick hourglass bodies to pursue self-improvement goals.

The prevalence of more positive outcomes among young Black women (six compared with three) may be attributed to their shared racialized background with the U.S. Black women rap artists. The perceived similarity with an upward standard may be an important factor in why people feel better about themselves after making comparisons (Kang & Liu, 2019) and also in why they assimilate toward a standard that appears attainable (Dankoor et al., 2023). Interestingly, a small number of White women (two out of three) solely experienced positive actual body images and emotions such as confidence. Among young Black women, positive outcomes were always accompanied by negative ones. These two White participants believed that they embody the Black body ideal in U.S. women rap videos. For them, this genre may be more of a source for actual body appreciation than an inspirational source for body improvement. Future research may wish to further explore rap fandom among women who feel that they fit the ideal and, for example, answer the question whether they enjoyed this genre because in songs and videos, their body type is celebrated.

For the majority of both Black and White respondents (nine and seven respectively), comparisons to the thick rap ideal led to negative actual body images and emotions such as insecurity and frustration. These negative outcomes appeared to stem from the direction of their comparisons as the respondents' evaluations of their actual bodies *contrasted away* from their perceived ideal bodies (e.g., Crusius et al., 2022). Specifically, they emphasized the disparities between their bodies and specific parts such as waists and buttocks, compared with those portrayed by (naturally) thick U.S. Black women rap artists.

The ought body image, one's perceptions of what body type others expect them to have, can also contribute to negative emotions such as pressure, worry, and shape concerns. Here, differences between our Black and White respondents emerged. All nine Black women believed that the ought body image was relevant, but the same notion was only present among one out of nine White women. Previous qualitative and quantitative studies have suggested that (young) Black women from the United States may believe that their environment (i.e., family, men peers) expect them to be thick. These studies also showed that Black women may experience body anxiety and pressure to conform (e.g., Capodilupo, 2015; Capodilupo & Kim, 2014; Hughes, 2021; E. A. Hunter et al., 2017). Our study found that this may also hold true for Dutch Black women and that in addition to family and men peers, their women friends can contribute to such pressures. By contrast, the White participants stated that people in their environment did not expect them to have a rapper body because they are White, further supporting the idea that cultural norms may shape body expectations (e.g., Hughes, 2021). Milkie's (1999) qualitative study found that U.S. White girls believed that their men peers evaluated them on the basis of the thin models in mainstream White magazines, whereas African American girls did not. In our study the roles of Black and White women are reversed. We found that Black respondents believed that their (men) peers expect them to have a rapper body, whereas the White participants did not. These results on the ought body image may illustrate that ethnicity can act as a "protective factor" against body image concerns (Milkie, 1999; Rogers Wood & Petrie, 2010) among White women when the thick ideal is emphasized. However, other factors, such as individual media habits, may also play a significant role; therefore, more research is needed to corroborate this claim.

Black and White participants dealt with negative body images and emotions in highly similar manners. Both groups revealed that embracing a journey of self-love and acceptance, unfollowing certain thick hourglass women rap artists on social media, and wearing clothes that accentuate their curves decreased negative outcomes. The latter coping mechanism partly aligns with the results of Appleford's (2016) qualitative study among Black Caribbean women from the United Kingdom. This study showed that women may make certain clothing choices to appear thicker. Future studies may wish to explore the long-term consequences of such coping strategies—for example, positive rational acceptance versus appearance fixing (Bailey et al., 2016)—on one's body image in the context of music media comparisons. It is furthermore important to note that both some Black and White respondents introduced the notion of body neutrality, that is, focusing not on the appearance of bodies but their capacity to sense, act, and enjoy (Alleva & Tylka, 2021). By perceiving the body as an active agent instead merely as the impact of being exposed to a myriad of attractive rappers' bodies, the tendency to adopt them as standards may be softened.

Strengths, Limitations, and Suggestions for Future Research

The main strength of this study is that it addressed several gaps in existing research.

First, focusing on the Afrocentric thick hourglass ideal flips previous (music) media studies that have prioritized the European thin ideal. Second, while previous studies have theorized about the Afrocentric thick ideal embraced in the popular genre of U.S. commercial women rap (e.g., LaVoulle & Lewis Ellison, 2018), no study to date has empirically explored the relationship between this ideal and women listeners' body images. Third, our decision to compare two ethnic groups adds an important and unique dimension to this study as cross-cultural approaches within rap audience studies are rare (Dankoor et al., 2023). By incorporating such comparisons, we contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of ethnic and cultural factors in shaping body images and ideals in the context of music media. Fourth, this research addressed the need to use culturally sensitive, qualitative approaches within body image research, thereby enhancing our understanding of the underlying processes involved in body image formation (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014; Lowy et al., 2021; Poran, 2006). Our study shows that the sensitizing concepts regarding idealization, comparison, and social pressures have been fruitful in conceptualizing research questions and interpreting results. Finally, the inclusion of the understudied concept of ought body image places this study in a larger sociocultural context and adds to its relevancy (DiMaggio & Markus, 2010).

The main limitation of this study is the sample of focus. Although appropriate for qualitative methods and carefully defined in terms of nationality, ethnicity, age, and involvement with U.S. commercial women rap, the scale of this study limits the potential for generalizations. Future studies should duplicate this study on a larger scale and/or focus on different populations, such as women in different countries, developmental stages (e.g., adolescents,

established adults), gender minorities (e.g., transgender, nonbinary), or with other cultural identities (e.g., immigration, bicultural). Similarly, it would be important to define degrees of involvement with rap to gain a more specific understandings of the ways in which frequency of consumption and fandom inform perceptions of the popular rapper's body and their own body ideals. Furthermore, future research may also want to select respondents with diverse evaluations of their bodies; interviewing (young) women who feel that they come close/do not come close to the thick hourglass ideal may give valuable insights into (directions of) comparison processes and outcomes on actual and ought body images. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term consequences of exposure to the thick ideal. Positive emotions of inspiration and motivation may turn negative when individuals realize that this ideal is more challenging to achieve than initially anticipated. More in general, the results of this study convincingly show that rap is relevant for both Black and White women rap fans. However, it remains an open question whether this influence will persist into established adulthood. Our qualitative study could be enriched by a longitudinal design to answer the question of to what extent and for how long media personae provide relevant examples for comparison.

Another limitation is related to methodological concerns. For example, it is important to establish a clear definition of what is considered a thick hourglass body. Using pictures of different women's body types during the interviews could enhance points of difference and convergence around these ideals. Finally, the primary investigator's insider positionality may have influenced respondents' comfort levels and what was shared (Bukamal, 2022). Future research may want to use interviewers with diverse backgrounds to see if different outcomes occur.

Implications for Clinical Practice and Conclusion

First, it is important for clinicians who are working with body image clients to recognize that women with diverse racialized backgrounds may endorse different body ideals. Our study shows that the dominant thin European ideal is not leading among Black rap fans and that a thicker Afrocentric ideal may even have become the standard among White fans. Aspirations to and comparisons with the thin ideal or thicker ideal on social media have been related to body dissatisfaction, weight dissatisfaction, disordered eating (e.g., Joiner et al., 2023; McComb & Mills, 2022a, 2022b), but our study demonstrates that endorsing and comparing oneself with the thick ideal in a rap context may also have positive consequences such as pride of one's body, motivation to sculpt the body according to the ideal, but also negative ones such as poor body image, feelings of insecurity, and anxiety.

Second, on a more general level, interventional programs initiated by clinical health professionals, both within and outside the context of schools and youth centers, should actively encourage open dialogues among young people regarding body image (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010). Engaging in discussions about body expectations for oneself and from others, which encompasses the concept of ought body image, has the potential to more clearly define one's own actual and ideal self and foster empathy for others in the same process. By openly sharing and reflecting on societal pressures and personal struggles related to body image, individuals may develop a deeper understanding of their own and each other's experiences and challenges, leading to increased support within peer groups.

Third, both Black and White participants raised the notion of body neutrality. Intervention programs may want to develop approaches that focus on decentering appearances of bodies and instead emphasize the capabilities of individuals' bodies. Recent studies have shown that body neutrality approaches are valuable in clinical care, alongside body positive approaches (Alleva & Tylka, 2021; Sharp et al., 2023).

Fourth, our results also highlight the need to integrate protective filtering approaches, as some Black and White respondents shared that unfollowing certain thick rap artists decreased negative attitudes and feelings toward their bodies. Such programming may teach (young) women how to filter content that influences body image (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010). Last, intervention programs should also consider the effects of positive feedback on healthy body image development (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014), as some Black and White participants mentioned how receiving positive feedback from family members and partners helped them cultivate a positive and healthy body image. Thus, clinical health professionals may want to encourage their clients' social environments to provide positive reinforcement.

In summary, while we must acknowledge the negative consequences of medialized body images—whether thin or, in this case, thick—our study also reveals unique and optimistic results. Specifically, idealized rapper bodies can inspire positive body images among women and motivate them to embrace and enhance their own shapes through exercise. Future research may want to further explore the impact of self-improvement media comparisons, which may benefit intervention programs targeting healthy behaviors (Veldhuis et al., 2017). This global musical cultures' expansion of women's body ideals opens the door for future research to explore this phenomenon across different disciplines, including public health, counseling, psychology, and intersectionality studies. Hopefully, future studies will conduct similar research with diverse populations so we can better understand the relationship between U.S. commercial women rap consumption and women's body images and emotions.

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