

# Black teen girls seek inclusive body types in anti-obesity advertising

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A recent qualitative research study conducted by the University of North Florida, in partnership with Indianan University-Purdue Indianapolis and UF Health Jacksonville, shows that black teenage girls want inclusive

body types to be featured in advertising to combat teen obesity rates. Insights provided in the study are ideal for pediatricians and healthcare educators developing advertising and patient care plans to combat obesity among African American teens.

The study investigated social and cultural consequences of food consumption among African American teenage girls between the ages of 14-18 in Jacksonville, Fla., and explored [best practices](#) for anti-obesity communication in advertising. The teenagers in the study led active lifestyles and disagreed with traditional advertising that centered on a one-size-fits-all recommendation for weight management among teens like them.

Results from the study indicate preference for an inclusive body type approach that showcases advertising featuring diverse girls of different body types, races, etc., and that messaging should promote [healthy lifestyles](#) instead of a specific body-mass index measure. Utilization of social media platforms was recommended as the best communication method for message dissemination.

"Promoting one-size-fits-all messaging is counterproductive and excludes important cultural factors that influence food choice, options and normative beliefs regarding food culture and body genetics," said Dr. Natalie A. Mitchell, UNF marketing professor and principal investigator of the study. "These teenage girls respond best to messages that portray them as curvy and healthy."

Research participants reported struggling to balance their cultural food preference of soul food, often high in fat and sugar, with healthier food options. Results also revealed that the [teenage girls](#) preferred 'slim thick', curvier body types, which include slim waistlines with shapely bottoms regardless of their petite, thin frames and is considered [cultural capital](#), according to the research team.

"A [driving force](#) behind the desire for the Coca-Cola bottle frame commonly seen within the African American community is due to celebrity culture that celebrates such body types," said Mitchell.

Through in-depth interviews and photo elicitation, the girls identified celebrity [body](#) types whom they greatly admired and desired. Tiffany Haddish and Tyra Banks were the celebrities most frequently selected. Decisions were based on celebrity curvy frames and their likability.

**More information:** Tony Stovall et al, An exploratory study on the sociocultural consequences of food consumption patterns among African American girls, *Appetite* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.appet.2021.105429](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2021.105429)

Provided by University of North Florida

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