

Predictors and Consequences of Adolescent Boys' Body Dissatisfaction

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine constructs conceptualized as predictors and consequences of body dissatisfaction among adolescent boys. Weight status was assessed and surveys were used to query 69 adolescent males (mean age =19 years) about their body image, self-esteem, dieting behaviors, and interest in cosmetic surgery. Results indicated that adolescent males' BMI and self esteem each explained unique variance in boys' body image. Boys' body image was also associated with their attempts to change their bodies via dieting and consideration of cosmetic surgery. Findings are discussed in terms of the apparent similarities in the correlates of adolescent girls' and boys' body image.

Introduction

❖ Although the past decade has seen an increase in research addressing boys' body image (e.g., McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2004), research that simultaneously examines multiple predictors and consequences of boys's body dissatisfaction is still needed (Hobza, Walker, Yakushko & Peugh, 2007).

❖ Recent research (e.g., Gravener, Haedt, Heatherton & Keel, 2008) suggests that associations between boys' body images and behavioral attempts to change their bodies (e.g., via dieting) are similar to those found among girls and women.

❖ Research has not examined the extent to which adolescent boys' body image is associated with their interest in cosmetic surgery.

Aims

❖ To investigate weight status and self-esteem as predictors of adolescent boys' body image experiences.

❖ To examine adolescent boys' body dissatisfaction as a predictor of their desire to diet and/or obtain cosmetic surgery.

❖ To compare findings regarding boys' body image to previous research findings (e.g., Markey & Markey, in press) regarding girls' body image.

Method

Participants

Sixty-nine adolescent males (mean age =19 years) participated in the present study as part of a larger study examining attitudinal and behavioral correlates of body image. Participants were recruited from a Northeastern metropolitan area and were ethnically and socioeconomically diverse.

Measures

❖ Body Image and Satisfaction

Participants were queried about the extent to which they were satisfied with their overall appearance (Body Image) and the extent to which they were satisfied with the appearance of their bodies (Body Satisfaction) using Likert scale items (1-9). 13% of this sample reported being completely satisfied with overall appearance and 12% reported being satisfied with their bodies.

❖ Weight Status

Weight status was operationalized using BMI: (weight(kg)/height²(m)).

❖ Dieting Behaviors

Participation in healthy (i.e., "eat fruits and vegetables") weight loss techniques was assessed using the 12-item Healthy Dieting subscale of French's (1995) Weight Control Behavior Scale.

❖ Self-Esteem

Self-Esteem was assessed using Rosenberg's 10-item Self-Esteem Scale (1979).

❖ Cosmetic Surgery Interest

Participants' attitudes about altering their physical appearance using cosmetic surgery was assessed with a measure created for the purposes of this research (Markey & Markey, in press). 12% of the current sample reported interest (slightly-strongly) in changing their appearance via cosmetic surgery.

Results

Table 1. Correlations among variables conceptualized as predictors and consequences of body image.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1) Body Image	---					
2) Body Satisfaction	.80**	---				
3) BMI	-.33**	-.28+	---			
4) Self-Esteem	.54**	.39**	.05	---		
5) Dieting	-0.19	-.21+	.31*	-.17	---	
6) Surgery	-0.10	-.25*	.06	-.19	.33**	---

❖ Simultaneous regression analyses were used to examine the unique explanatory power of predictor variables in this study: BMI and self-esteem.

~BMI ($\beta = -.30^{**}$) and self-esteem ($\beta = .41^{**}$) each explained unique variance in boys' overall body image.

~BMI ($\beta = -.36^{**}$) and self-esteem ($\beta = .56^{**}$) each explained unique variance in boys' body satisfaction.

❖ Simultaneous regression analyses were used to further examine the variables conceptualized as consequences of dissatisfaction in this study: dieting behaviors and interest in cosmetic surgery.

~When BMI is statistically controlled, regression analyses reveal that body satisfaction still predicts boys' interest in cosmetic surgery ($\beta = -.25^{*}$).

~Body satisfaction does not explain variance in dieting behaviors beyond that explained by BMI ($\beta = .27^{*}$).

Discussion

This study adds to growing literature on boys' body dissatisfaction and points to future research directions. Similar to girls and women, boys in this sample were more likely to be dissatisfied with their bodies when they were relatively heavy and had low self-esteem. However, while weight status is usually the primary predictor of girls' body dissatisfaction, it appears in this sample that psychological factors (i.e., self-esteem) may be more central to males' body perceptions. Potential consequences of body dissatisfaction among boys appear to parallel those found among girls and include dieting and the desire to obtain cosmetic surgery. Understanding boys' body dissatisfaction is increasingly important as "solutions" to ameliorate body dissatisfaction such as cosmetic surgery become more popular.

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