

A Relationship between Student Perceptions
of Body Image and Student Participation
in After School Activities

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Megan E. Green

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Diane Klemme

The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
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**The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751**

Author: Green, Megan E.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this literature review is to determine if children and adolescent body image affects participation in after school activities. This literature review delved into what has already been researched and if additional research still needs to be investigated. The research problem will look at the relationship between body image and school participation in after school activities.

An individual's body image may hinder or help a student to become more or less active in school. Those students that have a negative perception of body image may be less likely to participate in activities with other students; therefore losing time with peers. Students with negative body image may be at a disadvantage in the future when interacting with other adults in the workplace or in personal relationships.

The literature review provides an understanding of student's positive and negative body image perceptions. The majority of studies reviewed relate body image to sports or body image to the development of disordered eating. Specific causes for developing a positive or negative body image were researched and included: media, family, peers, and specific sport participation.

Critical analysis of the literature review revealed that body image could affect what after school activities students will choose to participate in. More importantly, the way a student feels about his or her body will usually push them to want to exercise more and join a sport. Those students that choose to participate in any after school activities may have more positive body image perception. When students stay active they feel better about how they look and gain socialization skills in the process of participating with other students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper is offered up to students, family members and friends that have dealt with body image issues and the effects on school participation. I can only hope that with reviewing the following research studies, some conclusions can be met to help students with body image issues. Our society dwells on image and I want to help students find their true self and feel good about whom they are and how they perceive themselves. I want them to feel free to participate in any activities they are interested.

There are many persons that have supported me through writing this paper. First, I would like to thank my parents Bill and Pam. They have been my strongest supporters through all of the ups and downs. Second, I would like to thank all of friends and extended family for being my cheerleaders. Last but not least, I would like to thank Diane Klemme, my research advisor, for helping me with this paper, even though time is scarce.

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Chapter I: Introduction

If a person browsed through the magazine section in a bookstore and look at the covers they would be instantaneously aware of what the mass media in America considers to be a beautiful woman; the same is true for men. The American media wants people to “buy” into and desire to look like a model. This “ideal” body image has been plastered on billboards everywhere. These ads make viewers feel self-doubt because they do not have the new and improved thing or the right kind of body (Cash, & Pruzinsky, 2002). According to Cash and Pruzinsky (2002), the cultural norm for the 1990’s ideal body is thinner for women and more muscular for men. Body image negativity rises and so do sales of objects promising to make people look and feel better. This is capitalism at its best. Children and adolescents are often naïve to these ploys, and often get caught up in what the world is selling. Young children learn early in school, that body image and looking good has more emphasis than before. Having a positive or negative body image can change a student’s performance at school. A positive body image may allow students to fit in with other students by becoming active in academics and other nonacademic activities.

There are many factors that can complicate how the body is viewed such as: the media, peers, family, culture and values. All of these variables can have great impact on a child and/or adolescents perception of body image. It is important to reinforce a child’s body image with positive parental modeling and positive talk. The future of the child depends on their self-esteem as they are maturing and going through pubertal changes. A recent study found that fourth graders compared to seventh graders were more likely to

describe themselves as being overweight (Adams, Sargent, Thompson, Richter, Dorwin, & Rogan, 2000).

A positive or negative influence on body image may begin early in the home. Parents and family members can play a crucial role in children and adolescent's body image perceptions. If a parent has a negative outlook of their own body image, that may lead to the child obtaining the same outlook. Parents need to encourage children to explore their own physical strengths, not encourage teasing at home, and model a healthy body image (Cash, & Pruzinsky, 2002).

Once children start school, fellow peers can influence how they look at their own bodies. Peers can be a positive influence on how students feel about their own bodies. If students are given positive feedback as to how they look, their body image perception can improve. For example, if a girl is told that she looks good or someone likes her outfit her self-esteem is boosted (Cash, & Pruzinsky, 2002). The students that are picked on because of what they wear or how their bodies look will begin to have negative outlook. In the book, *Diary of an Anorexic Girl*, the author Menzie writes about her life in a journal. She explains how peers influence her ability to feel good about herself and how she looks to others. One of her friends was an anorexic and ate near to nothing at school. This influenced the author because the friend got so much attention for "looking good" and the author wanted that as well. She writes about her changing eating habits and also dealing with becoming an anorexic. The deceptions and value placed on a thinner body image was the push the author needed to develop an eating disorder within two years (Menzie, 2003). Peers at school are formed by commonalities and norms within the school. Body image can deter a student from forming peer groups or wanting to involve

himself or herself with anyone at school (Cash, & Pruzinsky, 2002). Students that are more accepted by the larger population may be asked to do more activities with other student. It is possible that students that are not active want to be active within their school, but are not as confident. These students may need a push in the right direction.

As mentioned previously, another variable that affects body image is the media. In the 1950s and 60s Marilyn Monroe was the ideal of beauty. Today Marilyn would be seen as the average size of an American woman and no longer the ideal size. The images that are shown over and over again are believed to be the norm (Davis, 1999). It is found that after looking at a fashion magazine for 3 minutes, 70 percent of women feel more depressed (Davis, 1999). No matter what women do, they understand that they will never look like the unrealistic figures in the magazines. The same rules apply for men. Cultural beliefs blend in with the media's effect on body image. The more American culture believes what the media is selling, the more the culture believes in women and men looking a particular way. Other cultures around the world and some in America have different outlooks on body image. Some cultures believe that larger body size is more beautiful than smaller sizes (Cash, & Pruzinsky, 2002). Nevertheless, these factors may affect how a child develops a positive body image; which in turn may affects their choices throughout school and beyond. The current and passed research will educate on the topic of body image and school participation within this literature review.

Statement of the Problem

The two topics of body image perception and participation in after school activities may be linked. The area of body image can hinder or help a student to become more or less active in the school process as a whole. Those students that have a negative

perception of body image may be less likely to participate in activities with other students; therefore losing quality social time with peers. This may leave students less socialized compared with students more willing to participate with fellow peers in sports, or any after school programs. Important development during this time in students' lives may be lost. This could hinder how they participate with adults in the workplace and gaining friendships.

Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this research study is to determine if children and adolescent body image is found to have affects on how active they are in after school activities. Other forces beyond the media can be factors such as peer influence, and familial relationships in body image problems that plague our culture. Adolescents mind can be twisted to believe what peers, family members, coaches and school faculty may tell them about their bodies (Stewart, 2001). This literature review is will be evaluating past research on the topics of body image and school activity participation. The research under review represents a wide range of school-aged students across the U.S. and other countries. This review should be able to give examples of how body image and school relate. Also, the research should determine some of the causal factors for positive and negative body image and how these factors affect participation at school. A review of previous research should determine potential gaps in areas of current research and future research.

Research Questions

This literature review will concentrate on finding the answers to the following questions.

1. Is there a connection between perceived body image and after school activity participation?
2. Are there differences between grade levels and body image and after school activity participation?
3. Are there differences between genders and body image and after school activity participation?
4. Are there differences between active and inactive students and social skills, friendship forming relationships with other students?
5. Does one's perceived body image determine which activities one will be involved in; especially when selecting a sport?

Definition of Terms

Body Image – The subjective experience of the appearance of one's body (American Psychological Association, 2005)

Perception – The processes that organize information in the sensory image and interpret it as having been produced by properties of objects or events in the external, three-dimensional world (American Psychological Association, 2005).

Physical development – The bodily changes, maturation, and growth that occur in an organism starting with conception and continuing across the life span (American Psychological Association, 2005).

Self-esteem – A generalized evaluative attitude toward the self that influences both moods and behavior and that exerts a powerful effect on a range of personal and social behaviors (American Psychological Association, 2005).

Peer Pressure – Friends that have influence on what a person does, will do or thinks (Davis, 1999). A strong influence on someone coming from someone else of similar background and age level (Kittleston, 2005).

Anorexia nervosa – An eating disorder where a person controls eating because he or she is afraid of becoming overweight and weighs less than 85 percent of normal weight (American Psychological Association, 2005).

Bulimia nervosa – When a person binges on food and then purges the food to get rid of calories (American Psychological Association, 2005).

Assumptions and limitations

Undoubtedly, there may be many limitations found based on the resources that are made available on the topic of body image and participation in school activities. It must be assumed that the reviewed literature will show that perception of body image will affect a student's participation in after school activities. The literature will explain the differences between negative and positive body image and self-esteem. Also, the research will report on whether or not students are participating in school activities based on their body image. There should be reasons given, as to why students choose to participate in school activities and which activities students are more likely to join.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The literature review will discuss the variables that may affect perceptions of body image for children and adolescents. The variables may also have an affect on how active students are in school activities. Children and adolescent body image perception will be discussed first and followed by females. Body image and males, peers, media, family, and culture will then be discussed as affecting variables. After the factors are reviewed, the research on body image and school activities and sports are explained. Body image and school activity are important areas to discuss in order to understand children and adolescents that are not getting socialization in school activities. Finally, the importance of having a positive body image and being active will conclude the review.

There is a body of literature and research that has been done on body image and sports, disordered eating for males and females, and male muscle/body complexes. One study by Adams et al. (2000) indicates that early in sociocultural development, race, age and SES play a critical role in influencing body size, and weight concerns.

Unfortunately, there is little research to suggest or disprove students participate more or less often in school activities based on body image. The most common studies that were found adhere to body image and sport participation. The research explains that some students may choose to participate in sports to overcome body image issues. This literature review will determine factors that cause positive or negative body image and how body image affects student participation.

Background of body image development

Positive body image

There are only two options when it comes to the topic of body image: positive and negative. The perception is to have a positive body image most often. Some people may have a positive body image at certain times and develop a negative body image later on. Outside factors can impress upon how a person will view their own bodies. A book called, "*What's real, what's ideal: overcoming a negative body image*" by Davis (1999) discusses positive and negative body image. A positive body image is when a person views him or herself and feels good about what they see. This is the image that a person needs to view in order to feel happy and healthy when they look in the mirror. Along with a positive body image comes a positive outlook on life. There can be a relationship between positive feelings about body image and feeling good about life (Davis, 1999).

Negative body image

Davis continues on to explain that negative body image is looking into a mirror and viewing the body off-putting way. This leads to viewing life insufficiently and all factors that come into play (1999). Having a negative body image can damage self-esteem and long-term goals in life. Once a negative body image has formed it is difficult to change body image perceptions. The belief that trying to fix the body will help all other problems disappear is not completely true. Negative body image is learned and as B. Davis explains, "it can be unlearned" (1999). There are many factors that can attribute to having a positive and/or negative body image.

Factors of Body Image

Body Image: Children and Adolescents

Body image and self-image, self esteem are different concepts. Kittleson (2005), describes the differences these concepts. Self-image is how a person sees self and self-

esteem is how a person feels about self. The term body image is how to see self and see others. Having a positive body image is a realistic way of looking at the body and putting value of a person over viewing self. A negative body image is the negative perception of looking at body shape and attractiveness (Kittleson, 2005). Erik Erikson and other theorists look at social development as a series of stages. He believes that young children have more issues that deal with trust and independence. Children that are in school want to prove that they are capable and able to be part of society. Once children move into adolescence they begin to ask question that will determine their own identity. He goes on to explain that forming identity means trying out different "selves." Some adolescents develop their identity based on what their parents believe. He also believes that negative identity may be forged to be in opposition of parents in order to fit into a group (Myers, 2001).

Childhood and adolescence is a crucial time in development. During puberty bodies develop and grow. There are many changes that the body will go through at one time. Most of the time a student will feel out of control when it comes to his or her own body changes. During and before menstruation the female will gain weight in order to be ready for childbirth. There is breast development, hip growth and increased body fat. All of these changes can lead to increases in negative body image due to feelings of awkwardness (Davis, 1999). Males are not without feelings of awkwardness during puberty. This can be a time of feeling less than "normal" if a male does not have the lean muscular body that is desired. If the desired body type has not been met, males and females will begin to diet. Some males may begin lifting weights to develop more

muscle mass. A negative body image may push males and females to diet and lift weights compulsively (Davis, 1999).

The body is changing and developing, feelings form and the thoughts of the mind become more complex. As the body is changing, especially during puberty, and boys and girls are more aware of what they look like to others. Puberty for adolescents plays a role in body image perception. One study (Murdey et al., 2004) found a correlation between body image and pubertal status; which is stronger for girls than for boys. This study also showed that if an adolescent is getting less sleep, he or she is more likely to be sedentary.

Negative body image perceptions may be starting earlier and earlier with every generation. Another longitudinal study about puberty timing and body changes show that adolescent girls experience a more negative body image than boys (Adolescence, 2004). For girls that have entered into puberty earlier than other girls or boys who are following behind later have more dissatisfied body image. It seems that boys that have started puberty earlier are at an advantage; when it comes to the opposite sex. These boys are more satisfied with their bodies. Girls are the opposite where they are more dissatisfied with their bodies (No Author, 2004). These studies show that children are just as prone to body image dissatisfaction as are adolescents.

Body Image and Females

Females and males differ in so many areas of life especially their thinking related to body image. Men and women can have extremes as to what they believe is a beautiful body and these beliefs about body image begin at an early age. This section will review female body image.

One study found that females and seventh graders describe themselves as being more overweight than males and 4th graders (Adams et al., 2000). In the book, "*Adios, Barbie*" (1998), Edut shared short stories of women and body image issues. The author discussed the idea of women being bodies rather than possessing bodies. This would mean that women were objectified by what they did and how they looked doing it, rather than how well they did. Women were taught to separate their own identities from their bodies and distort their body image. Whether it is an athlete, an artist or a singer, all of these areas can define who a person is or what specific groups women belong to. Depending on many variables women have preconceived notions of how they should look to others. An athlete should be lean and muscular, and an artist should look earthy and creative.

The book explained that women should not let the body speak for them. Women must take control of outer factors that can control them and talk about how the media hurt female body image (Edut, 2000). In another book, "Body image understanding body dissatisfaction in men, women and children," women believe the ideal is to stay slim but be full breasted. Most women were found to be dissatisfied with their bodies as a whole, especially their stomachs, hips, and thighs. If women could choose, they would choose to be thinner and constantly strive to be thinner and toned (youthful) (Grogan, 1999). The ways that women describe themselves or what women are labeled play an import role on how women feel about their bodies. In a book, "Making weight, Men's conflicts with food weight, shape & appearance" by Anderson, Cohn and Holbrook (2000), the authors, explain that vocabulary plays a role on how women feel about their bodies. Adjectives to describe the word thin are slim, willowy, svelte, and model-like. Some words to describe

bigger women are full figured, or plus size, this vocabulary highlights western societies view on body shape. Each woman is different but every girl begins her life modeling what a woman figure in her life says, does and believes women should look like (2000).

Author S. Heese-Biber addresses in her book, "Am I thin enough yet?" (1996) that body type as reflected by the mirror images by which many judge are important. The mirror is an analogy for how society encourages women's obsession with body image and weight loss. The mirror is a reflection of a true likeness but this likeness changes because of distorted body image issues. Every woman disapproves of some part of her body, when looking into a mirror (Heese-Biber, 1996). Society plays the part of the encourager. The American industry plays an enormous role of getting people to eat junk food and then the exercising promotes losing the weight with a new machine. Women are especially good at falling off a diet and starting a new one. All of these tactics relate back to body size and negative perceptions (Heese-Biber, 1996). There are three types of body images that S. Heese-Biber recounts. These are: ectomorphic, mesomorphic and endomorphic. Ectomorphic means lean and angular. The body type mesomorphic is a muscular body and endomorphic is a more rounded or plump body. It has been found that society lumps personality in with body type. The overweight body signifies greed, laziness, no sense of moderation and the like. Having a slim body represents a strong persona and high morals (1996). The author writes about how she wanted to be liked and when she was in fifth grade she played little league with the boys. She felt that no one cared that she was an overweight girl when she played star catcher with the boys. They were less complicated and did not judge the way that the girls would (Heese-Biber, 1996).

Body Image and Males

Many women throughout the world assume men have it so much easier and never worry about how they look; however the research does not reflect this assumption. Men worry and care about how they look and how others view their bodies just as much as women (Heywood & Dorkin, 2003). Men and women differ in the areas that they are concerned about, but the perception of body image begins at a young age just like it does for women. The areas of concern for men can be: muscle tone on the arms, legs, chest and abdomen and the more toned the better (Heywood & Dorkin, 2003). The areas of concern for females and the body are: hips, butt, thighs, and abdomen (Heywood & Dorkin, 2003). Men seem to be just as obsessed as women and possibly more extreme about toned bodies than women. The “Adonis Complex” is a term to describe body obsession in boys and men. Over 50 percent of men are dissatisfied with their physical appearance according to authors Heywood and Dorkin (2003). According to a book about the Adonis complex by, Pope, Phillips and Olivardia (2000), the authors explain that as early as elementary school, boys are dissatisfied with their bodies and as a result become depressed. Pope, Phillips and Olivardia identify that men surveyed in a locker room found them to be 3 percent larger than they really were. These men were already muscular and they still wanted to have at least 15 pounds of more muscle added to their physique. These men also figure that society wants them to look even 10 pounds more muscular than they really are. The outcome of this finding suggests that men are not satisfied with their own bodies and they believe they are not living up to societies ideal (2000).

The body image areas men worry about are somewhat different than the women's areas. Grogan (1999), found that men are equally likely to want to be thinner or heavier. The areas that men worry about more often are the torso, biceps, shoulders, chest and overall muscle tone. Men compare their bodies to other men's bodies in the gym, which encourages harder training and more muscle development. Along with training, men want to be looked at as being strong, bigger or at least toned because they believe that is what women desire. Vocabulary describing men's size is factor on body image for men, just as it is for women. Anderson, Cohn and Holbrook's book on male body image (2000), explains vocabulary describing men's size. Thin men are often called, pencil neck, stick and skinny twerp. Larger men are called big daddy, monster and hulk, which seem to be more important and desired titles. Males were found to have heightened self-consciousness if they had extreme height levels (Booth, 1990). This could be a factor in which activities males will participate in due to how peers and society will perceive their bodies. Park and Read (1997) study on adolescent males found that professional football players, about 83 percent to be exact, want to gain weight but this does not mean that they have body image trouble. These players are found to be more satisfied with their bodies because they need to be larger for their sport. The study also looked at runners that desired to be thinner and had lower body esteem than the football players. Runners are conflicted because they need to be lean for their sport but society views men as being muscular and big. If a "normal" male size fits with a sport and not a lot of change is needed then males seem to be satisfied with their bodies.

Davis (1999) writes about overcoming negative body image and gives an example of a boy with body image issues. The subject, Darius, has an athletic family; where his

father is a coach and his brothers are jocks. His father was disappointed in him because he chose to participate in theatre. He feels disappointed in himself because he has no respect from his family. He eats food to comfort himself and binges (Davis, 1999). If someone has no respect for their self, this can lead to low self-esteem and negative body image. Darius did not have the respect he needed from his family because he was not as athletic as they were. This led to low self-esteem and a negative body image. He needed to have respect, encouragement and go-ahead to feel comfortable enough to participate in theater. Sometimes not participating in the “right” school activity can lead to negative feelings and behaviors. In the example, Darius learned to have negative body image feelings because he did not fit in to a sporting activity. He became depressed and binged and purged his food. This could possibly have been his way of ensuring that he would not be an athlete because he gained too much weight. Sometimes negative body image can sabotage participation in any activities (Davis, 1999). Men and women are not created equal but body size and body concerns image continually plague both sexes.

Body Image and Peers

One of the most important aspects of schooling is socialization for students. Every student longs for friends to talk to during the school day, while participating in school activities or to hang out with after the school day. In order to gain peers as friends, many students will do anything to get noticed or to seem “cool” to other students. Peer pressure plays an important role in adolescent lives. A strong adolescent is one with the ability to withstand comments about weight (not only weight) from peers. The body image and size can lead to a higher standing among peers but can lead to negative health problems. The health problems can occur from students excessively dieting, developing

an eating disorder, and body strain from excessive weight lifting (Marks, & Rothbart, 2003). As far as body image goes, many students will go to the extreme. According to Kalodner (2003), 45 percent of girls said they binged (overate in excess) because of peer pressure. To peers, thinness and constant dieting are the norm of the group. Members feel the need to fit in and if they model what other peers are doing they will feel accepted. A different study by Davison and McCabe (2006) examine psychological functioning and body image. There were 245 boys and 173 girls in eighth and ninth grade that participated in the study. The students filled out surveys on physical attractiveness,, self-esteem, body image, depression, and appearance. The authors found that negative body image and the opposite sex friendships did not do well together. They also found that within two years of different research questions, girls that feel less attractive more than likely had bad relationships with other girls. Girls show that how they perceive their own bodies is found within relationships with other girls and boys. A boy relationship with a girl may be the only factor that has affects on body image (Davison & McCabe, 2006). Kalodner (2003) gives an example of Tina, a girl who constantly compares herself to peers both academically and physically. She feels badly about herself, when she compares herself to peers that are thinner and feels better about herself compared to a larger peer. This student just wanted to fit in and the last thing she wanted to do was stick out (Kalodner, 2003). One part of school that constantly goes on between peers is teasing. Some students can handle teasing because they are confident within their self. Other students do not fair as well possibly because of lower self-esteem and body image. Teasing is a large part of the negative body image problem. According to Kalodner (2003), 71 percent of students say teasing has a negative affect on body image. When a

student is teased on a daily basis the student can begin to believe that he or she does not fit in. The student that is teased may develop more negative feelings toward themselves and toward other students. Slowly, negative body image perceptions will creep into the students mind and he or she will desire to change body appearance, just to fit in (2003). Peer pressure will always be a part of the school environment that students will have to deal with and unknowingly it may affect body image for life.

Body Image and the Media

The media in American culture could play a role in affecting body image for men and women, children and adolescents (Tiggemann, 2005). Television, magazines, and movies set a standard for all Americans on how to look, act, dress, and what to buy. This media image of the “perfect” body image is a component of the development of a positive or negative body image for both sexes. Regardless of the media hype one thing remains constant, people want to change things about their body, relationships, job, and life constantly. Children and teens are sucked into the media advertisements and do not understand that everything is not as it seems.

In today’s world, computer technicians airbrush and alter the images of models and celebrities to make them look more perfect, thinner, and smoother skinned (Kittleson, 2005). An example of the television media compares regular women and TV character women. American women are found to be 25 percent obese and 5 % underweight. American TV characters are 3 percent obese and 32 percent underweight. We can no longer trust any image on T.V. or in magazines. Another example of the media is, the average child watches, 10,000 food ads each year and 95 percent of those ads are for fast foods, candy, sugar cereal or soda pop (Kittleson, 2005). The reason that the trust has

been lost, is because the “ideal image” is no longer achievable due to technology. The magazines strive for perfection and perfection is not possible all the time. The adolescents of today are prone to believing that this is the only way to look (Marks, & Rothbart, (2003). When they cannot reach the perfection of toned bodies and long thin legs, they resort to extremes such as eating disorders and/or surgery. In Kalodner’s book, *“Too fat or too thin? A reference guide to eating disorders”* (2003), the author reviews the *Seventeen* magazine for girls ages 12-15 years old, markets it to those who want to place ads in the magazine. The magazine tells companies that their readers are vulnerable and will buy the companies products. Approximately 60-70 percent of models weigh 15 percent below expected body weight for their height (Koledner, 2003). There are differences between males and females in the media. According to Grogan (1999), men are portrayed in the media at a standard weight and women are shown underweight. After viewing TV or looking at magazines, most men and women, feel less good or secure about their bodies (1999). Most men in the media are shown to be muscular actors and models/actresses are the ideal shown for women. Based on extensive research done on how the media affects body image, one thing remains the same; the media is not going away. Children, teens and adults will continue to be affected by the media’s perfect pictures and wonder cures.

Changes could occur, if these groups will no longer allow the media to affect how both genders perceive their bodies. Another study entitled, “Television and adolescent body image: the role of program content and viewing motivation,” Tiggermann explains that watching soap operas promotes a feeling of needing to be thinner for girls and boys and more muscular for boys. The soap operas are more reality based because they

explain the daily lives of individuals. The actors in soap operas somewhat reflect “normal” people that could be found anywhere. These shows are slower paced and viewers can share in the drama of life with the characters on the show, even though there is over-representation of divorce, tragedy, and professional jobs. These shows push the drive for thinness desire into greater reality for women (Tiggemann, 2005). A different study by Tiggemann, in 2006, explained that media thinness promotion goes with negative body image. The study included 214 female high school students, and found that by the time girls are adolescents they have viewed enough media promotion of thinness, that many desired to change their body image. The media and body image perceptions coincide together but it was not found that the media is the direct cause of negative body image issues.

Body Image and Family

Family may be a strong variable that affects body image and participation in school. Children growing up with parents or guardians have parental influences put upon them from the very beginning of development. Parent comments about body size and shape can impact a child or teen’s body image for life. The pressure from families to be a specific size is a burden for many students. This may lead students to want to change their body size/shape in extreme. Every family has set norms and values concerning size and participation in school. The strongest perception comes from children modeling what parents do or what they say about body image. According to Kalodner (2003), families have specific norms about weight and weight loss. Mother and daughter relationships have the hardest affect on body image. Mothers that want their daughters to lose weight are more likely to have daughters that develop eating disorders/distorted body

image (Kalodner, 2003). *“The athletic woman’s survival guide how to win the battle against eating disorder, amenorrhea, and osteoporosis”* by Otis and Goldingay, (2000), explains that coaches and family members can lead both boys and girls to disordered eating habits in order to look better and become better athletes. The coaches push for specific diets for their athletes. Many times coaches will specifically tell the student an amount of weight that they need to lose. In extreme cases, coaches may not allow athletes to participate in the sport unless they have lost the weight or gained muscles mass (Otis & Goldingay, 2000). Family also has affects on males and female athletes genetically. Based on genetics and body image, athletes at risk for eating disorders are those whose inherited body types do not match the sport related field (Otis & Goldingay, 2000). Authors Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) find that two thin parents or four thin grandparents and genetics have more to do with thinness, no matter how much a person works out.

Neumark-Sztainer (2005) explain the importance of parents and family understanding factors that may lead to problems with weight. Parents need to promote good eating habits, healthy environments, a different focus away from weight issues, and be supportive at all times. Each parent must take on some of the responsibility for negative body image preventative measures (Neumark-Sztainer, 2005). In many ways, family is unaware of the important affects that each person can have on developing body image in children and adolescents.

Body Image: Culture and Society

The majority of the research that was found on body image related to American culture. According to Kalodner’s book, *“Too fat or too thin? A reference guide to eating*

disorders” (2003), western culture increases eating disorder outbreaks. Kalodner’s studies showed that eating disturbances increased in countries that have been introduced to television. Eating disturbances levels for girls was at 13 percent before TV was introduced into countries and the level increased to 29 percent after TV had been established. Understandably, body image issues and school activity participation may change within different cultures and countries across the world. Ferron (1997) concluded in her research that cultural differences were based on true body perceptions and ideal body perceptions work together and the physical appearance is based on diversity of experience. Gender differences are found within controlling body changes; problems with body image is individual, familial and societal (Ferron, 1997). In America, a highly industrialized country, there are many ethnic groups. Overall, Caucasians seem to want to change their body image more than other groups due to media and variables (Ferron, 1997). Adams et al., (2000), tries to explain the weight control patterns of 4th and 7th grade students. The study found that typically more whites than blacks are trying to lose weight consistently (Adams et al, 2000). There are many differences found between black and white students. Blacks and 4th graders selected larger body image sizes than whites and 7th graders (Adams et al., 2000). Blacks are found to be less concerned about body image than whites. These findings may show that blacks, even at a younger age, are used to larger body sizes and are accustomed to those sizes compared to the white students. White students may be more preoccupied with body image issues than black students but the gap is narrowing (Adams et al., 2000). Grogan (1999) found that African Americans have heavier body shape ideals and are less dissatisfied than their white counterparts.

Hispanic populations seem to be the same as African American or Caucasian (Adams et al., 2000). According to Grogan (1999), western societies believe that being slender means being happy, successful, youthful and socially acceptable. Overweight people are lazy, lack will power and are more likely to be out of control eaters. Grogan also states that women's ideal body is slim and men's ideal is slender and moderately muscular in western society. Children in western societies are less likely to want to play with overweight children and show negativity toward those that are overweight (Grogan, 1999). If children are choosing to be selective about peers based on looks at an early age, then by the time they become adolescent body image will define all actions. Americanizing seems to be happening around the world because of food chains, technology and media. Overall, women from all cultural groups are becoming more and more dissatisfied with their body image (Grogan, 1999).

Body Image and School Activities

Currently there is a lack of research regarding body image and participation in school activities. There are no studies that relate wholly to the relationship between body image and school activities. However, "*Healthy teens facing the challenges of young lives*," a book about healthy teens by McCarthy (2000), explains that a girl staying active in after school activities and sports can benefit how women feel about themselves and their mood is lifted. A woman has a sense of purpose while participating in a group with other women of similar age. She can show her abilities and help to improve her body image by staying fit and healthy. More exercise equals a more toned body and less body fat. This can decrease negative body image because the body is smaller. Endorphins to the brain, which come from exercise, can increase self-esteem and mood. After school

activities can increase a young woman's belief that she is valuable. She will feel positive about herself and not about what she looks like.

Another research article by Richards, Boxer, Petersen and Albrecht (1990) explains that little research has been done on body image and after school activities. The research that was completed, studied 284 pubertal girls and boys from two communities. The authors found that participation in activities could reduce negative body image in girls. However differences existed between the two communities. The girls' weight and body image was different in the communities as was the girls' participation in school activities, cliques and athleticism. The boys were fine with weight and body image in both communities.

The students that participate in activities may feel better about self by gaining a useful skill or being with others. Activities might include the school newspaper, student council or athletics. Any school activity could help to improve body image outlook. This study has not dealt specifically with studying the relationship between choosing to participate in a specific after school activity because of his or her perceived body image.

Body Image and Sports

The most popular school activity is sports. Middle school and high school students have an opportunity to participate in sports. Physical activities are healthy for students, but it is also a time where they become more aware of their own bodies in comparison to their peers. The more positive or negative a student's perception of body image the more or less likely they are to join in sports (Robinson & Ferraro, 2004).

In order to stay healthy, author M. Kittleson (2005), writes that teens should participate in 20 minutes of vigorous activity 3 days a week. Another study explains that

sports participation not only helps maintain health but also encourages healthier body images (Robinson & Ferraro 2004). The research done by Robinson and Ferraro found that female athletes that compete for quickness like runners were not found to have as much body dissatisfaction; compared to nonathletes. The study included 53 female athletes and 55 female nonathletes. Students that did not participate in any type of sport were scoring higher in the desire to be thin, not being satisfied with their body image and had many differences between their body and what their ideal body type would be. So in the end sports participation may help females to view themselves with a more positive body image.

Women that were not playing sports were more likely to diet and worry about their weight. Some coaches may desire or pressure students into dieting or worrying about body image to improve the sports. This may depend upon the prestige of the sport at a specific campus. Some are more pressured to change his or her bodies and other programs may push healthier body image (Robinson & Ferraro, 2004). Some students that are not as active as other student may see a difference in body size and may feel more depressed because of their body image. Non-athletes expressed more dissatisfaction with their bodies than athletes (Robinson & Ferraro, 2004).

Krane et al. (2001) found that exercisers and athletes in different uniforms did not differ in body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness, and bulimia. The study found that any type of physical activity might be associated with positive affect regarding one's body. Parson and Betz (1990) found that some women choose to participate in sports or exercise because of poor body image. The study identified that specific sports such as soccer, golf, basketball and the like were found not as feminine but sports such as

gymnastics, cheerleading, and swimming were considered feminine. Depending on which sport puts more emphasis on body image will determine which sport a female will participate in. A females concern over meeting society standards of beauty may choose to participate in sports because any kind of athletic activity may increase self-esteem and could lower negative body image. Parson and Betz (1990) believe that women who have strong abilities will participate in sports but women with negative body image may also participate to make themselves feel better about their body (1990). Parson and Betz (2001), found that women participating in sports where more focused on appearance and showed higher levels of body shame on the McKinley and Hyde's (1996) objectified body conscious scale.

"Adios Barbie" (Edut, 1998) tells a story of a female athlete. The athlete believes that you have to work and think like a guy to be respected and have value as a female. She was striving to become one of the guys and she made everything physical. She was seen as a guy by all the guys. When she entered sports she was wanted to be taken seriously and have a body that was a close to a male body (Edut, 1998).

Another story is about Janet who tried out for cheerleading at a public weigh in. She weighed 125 pounds and was rejected because she weighed more than 115 pounds. This proved to her that a thin woman was a valued woman (Hesse-Biber, 1996).

The other story is about Heisman winner, Doug Flutie. He is short for being a quarterback and had to fight for cultural change. He was able to be a little big man but not for Janet to be a big little woman (Hesse-Biber, 1996). Evans shows the male and female differences within another research study. Girls are found to feel more pressure from boys to look good and to be good at sports. Even during times where there are no

males around, girls will continue to feel like they have to prove themselves. The fear is to be seen as not being good at a sport. Those girls that are good at sports feel better about being around boys. If the girls are not good at sports they will try to fake it or not choose to participate in sports at school. Losing confidence is the largest battle to overcome (2006). Overall, body image and sports go hand in hand. A range of students with different outlooks on body image will participate in sports for many reasons.

Body image and participation in school activities are important parts of the socialization process for students. There are many variables to overcome through childhood and adolescence that can affect perceptions of body image and the desire to participate in after school activities. There have been many research studies conducted and many self-help books written on the topic of body image. The topic of body image and sports is the topic most similar to the proposed research. Variables such as peers, media, family, culture may influence male and female body image most often.

Prevention and Intervention

There are numerous preventative measures that a student can take to understand body image. One book about understanding body image by Walker (2000); offers a body image questionnaire. This questionnaire can be used to help students understand how they view their own bodies. This may open up true feelings about body image and give some understanding to why he or she does or feels the way they do. This questionnaire can be a prevention tool for counselors; teachers; or other personnel to use with students that seem to have a negative body image or may be heading in that direction. The prevention comes with having the student learn more about him or herself by answering some of these questions. Some examples of questions are as follows:

Do you often check your appearance in mirrors or windows-even as you walk past on the street?

Do you frequently compare yourself to others like models, actresses and think you look worse?

Do you ask or want to ask others if they think you've lost weight?

Do you spend too much time getting ready in the morning because you can't find things that fit you and you think your clothes make you look fatter?

Do you buy clothes that hid or cover up areas of your body that look fat or ugly to you?

Do you feel uncomfortable around people if you are wearing clothes that you think make you look heavy?

Do you avoid having your picture taken?

Do you avoid dates or other social interactions if it means wearing clothing such as a swimsuit that you think you don't look good in?

Do you get depressed, anxious, frustrated or angry because of how you look? (pp. 26-27, 2000).

One more preventative measure to take when dealing with negative body image or a student that may be developing a body image problem is for parents, teachers and peers to make comments that are not related to body shape. This could be eye color, hairstyles but no comments on body because either way that a person would say it would sound wrong to the person with the negative body image. This is a trap that many people are pulled into by the student; especially parents (Claude Pierre, 1997). Another prevention that the author Bell (1998) discusses is the fact that no one should comment on how a

specific body part is not good enough. Every person should be able to compliment themselves and others on body parts that are likable. The body is an okay mass that is amazing (Bell, 1998). Many times prevention and intervention can fall into different programs, such as creative arts. Cameron, Juszczak and Wallace discuss using creative arts to cope with body image issues. There are many activities that can be used, such as: painting, drawing, reading, and journaling but videotaping or body outlining should not be used. Many of the arts can be used with groups of students (1984). Finally, when it comes to dealing with body image and the media, it is important to have students turn off the television more often. According to Project STIL (Sedentary Teenagers and Inactive Lifestyles), this will increase activity and can lower the possibility of student's building more body fat (Murdey & Cameron, 2005). The more active a student can be in school programs or other community programs the better for their health and well being. The media can also change its content through presenting more ranges of body image shapes. This will allow the population "norm" to feel more normal about the body that they have and not strive so determinedly for an ideal image. Girls especially, need to process and respond more often to their feelings toward what the media projects on television and magazines. This will help in overcoming body image stressors and allow them to feel more comfortable with whom they are as females and their image (Tiggemann, 2006).

Chapter III: Literature Review Analysis

Introduction

The literature review analysis is just that, analyzing the research that was found and what the outcomes mean in accordance with body image and participation in after school activities. The review's main points from past research will be summarized and discussed. Lastly, a critique will be made of all past research that has been done on these topics. Limitations will be pointed out from the research areas and points that are lacking. Also, conclusions about the research and recommendations for further research will be discussed. A proposal for a future research study will be discussed and examined in the Appendix A.

Summary of findings

There have been numerous research studies done on positive and negative body image. The affects of body image can vary greatly from person to person and age level to age level. Body image issues are developing earlier and earlier due to many cultural and societal factors (No author, 2004; Walker, 2000; Evans, 2006; Tiggemann, 2006).

There are several reasons why negative body image occurs and several ways that positive body image develops in students. The findings suggest that many factors play a part in how males and females view their bodies and this can determine how active they will be in school and in public (Davison & McCabe, 2006; Boxer et al., 1990; Parsons & Betz, 2001; Robinson & Ferraro, 2004). Some factors that determine societal and personal views are: genetic, peers, media, family, gender differences and the like. For adolescents, the media is a larger factor in viewing images of unrealistic body size, shape, and beauty (Kittleson, 2005; Stewart, 2001; Tiggemann, 2005; Tiggemann, 2006; James,

2005). Age level can also be a determinant of negative body image and when it can set in. Many researchers have done the majority of studies on the pubertal adolescent teenage level (Davis, 1999; Stewart, 2001; Boxer et al., 1990; Parson & Betz, 2001; Tiggemann, 2005). A fair amount of research has also been completed at the college level (Robinson & Ferraro, 2004). The least amount of research has been done at the childhood and early elementary age levels (Murdey & Cameron, 2005; Neumark-Sztainer, 2005). More often than not, body image issues will arise during puberty and throughout high school and college age levels. There may be a trend starting with younger students because of body image preoccupation due to environmental and social factors explained below (Neumark-Sztainer, 2005).

There is not one way to explain the numerous ways that the media affects one person each and every day. The media bombards us all with television commercials of what society believes to be a perfect looking man or woman. Magazine covers are loaded with computer generated or touched-up photographs of models. These models are not even a large percentage of society's norms for how a woman looks. All magazines today can be a façade, due to technological advances in graphics. What does this have to do with participation in school activities? If a student believes the messages that the media portrays everyday for an entire childhood; then he or she may not feel good enough about himself or herself to participate in anything. It may be a challenge just for these students to get out of bed every morning to come to school.

While at school, peers and non-peers can put pressures on students to look or act a certain way. This may not be the way that a student truly perceives himself or herself to be but puts the acts this way at school. Sooner rather than later the student may begin to

feel that his or her body image does not reach the top the way that others do. Peers and peer pressure can push a student to participate in school activities to stay active and keep a certain shape. Other peers can deter students from participating in an activity because it is not the “cool” thing to do. Some students’ feel so confused by peers and how they view themselves that they would rather just hide out at home in their bedroom than participate.

Family members can also have control over how a student perceives himself or herself. If a mother or father has a negative view of their own bodies and complain, diet, or constantly worry about how they look, this will reflect upon the student. A parent that may bother a student about his or her looks and critique them all the time can damage the positive body image for life. Other parents may push their student to participate in many school activities to stay active and healthy. They can push them into too many activities for the wrong reasons, as well. This can lead to students becoming too stressed out and pressured to be perfect all the time and in the end not enjoying life at school. Overall, many factors contribute but sometimes no one factor determines how students will feel or what they will choose to participate in at school.

There are preventative and interceptive measures that can be taken to ensure that students will keep a positive body image throughout their years in school and beyond. Parents, teachers, and school counselors can keep students with lower body image on the right track by commenting on the activities that the student excels in. The key is to keep comments and critiques positive and never comment on body shape, size or how body parts look. Negative comments and body shape comments are one of the quickest ways to discourage a student from participating in activities or keeping the desire to be around

other students. School counselors can help to boost self-esteem by using counseling sessions, self-esteem games and other tactics to keep the student staying positive.

Some curriculum that can be used are in the creative arts department. Students may have an easier time expressing themselves by drawing, writing, photography, skits and any other part of creativity. This may get the feelings about body image, which can be closed off to others, more out in the open. Preventative measures for girls could be running a girls group to discuss the pressures on girl's body image with today's media. Girls need to talk about the pressures of sports, thinness, and drive for perfection. Males also need to release their frustrations and talk about the pressures to become bigger, stronger, faster and more powerful. Some men need an outlet for feelings of negative body image because they realize they will never have the body that society believes they should have or the media portrays. The voices of youth need to be raised to discuss the pressures to fit in at school, participate in school activities and how that relates to feelings about image.

Critiques

The major critique that I have about this literature review is the fact that I had to draw from many sources in order to talk about many concepts. I could not find one specific journal article or study to discuss from that matched perception of body image and participation in after school activities (other than sports). There were similar studies done in the past on sports participation and body image. The reason that sports participation studies are so numerous is because sports are one of the main activities that schools offer to students. There are other after school groups that students can be apart of such as quiz bowl, student counsel, drama and FFA. Sport participation may be the best

variable because it deals the most often with body image issues. Shapes and sizes can deter a student from participation in sports or make them more likely to join sports. The downfall is that many other activities have not been studied because a student does not have to look a particular way to join. The problem is that there is little research on student participation in non-athletic fields. Most of the research was female oriented. There was some dealing with males but the majority of body image research is done on female participants. The age groups that were researched ranged from adolescent females to post-secondary levels. The problem is that there should be more research done in the area of early childhood and elementary levels to find connections that can spark early negative body image impressions. The sport research papers were numerous and very helpful but I could not find enough information concerning whether or not students will participate in school activities based on their perceived body image. The question, does body image matter when it comes to school activity participation, was not entirely addressed by one previous study. I would have liked to blend my findings together more to fit or try to answer more of my questions in this topic area. In the end I found that conclusions of this topic are still varied and wide open.

Limitations

One limitation of the study is the lack of research devoted to student participation in school activities other than sports participation and related fields of body image. Many of the studies that I found were researched at the college level (list above). There is however, large amounts of research in the area of body image and sports, and body image pertaining to eating disorders. The research that has not been found or not been finished

in this topic area limits findings and the understanding of body image and school activities.

Conclusion

The final conclusion is that body image plays a very important role in childhood, adolescence and adulthood. There is no way around how each person views everyone else and his or her own self. One of the worst-case scenarios, would be to continually have a negative body image that would cause a person to not participate in school and society. The learning experiences missed would be overwhelming. The causal factors that cause negative body image are everywhere but preventative measures can be taken to ensure that negative body image is stopped. School counselors have an obligation to watch for students that are struggling with body image issues and get them the help that they need. Also, counselors must realize some students are participating in school activities or over participating in activities to change body image in excess. The school, peers, family and even the media have to come together to help combat body image issues from rising through generations.

Recommendations

As recommended earlier, school counselors, teachers and parents have to take body image issues seriously. After reviewing literature for this paper, the conclusion is that more research must be done. One proposal for a research study in the area of body image and school activity participation can be found in Appendix A of this paper. This is a proposal only and a recommendation for a study that could be tried. More researchers need to investigate why students choose the school activities that they choose and does this have to do with peers, family, body image issues or just plain interest?

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Appendix A: Proposal for Future Research

Note:

This is an added section of the thesis that describes the demographics and details of the adolescents who could participate in a research study. The instrumentation used, data collection methodology, analysis of data, and limitations are also discussed in this section of the thesis.

This is only a preview of a type of study that could be done in order to research body image and participation in after school activities.

Assumptions of a future study

The study is assumed to go smoothly. The researcher plans to have all surveys filled out honestly by each student. As the surveys are given to each student it is expected that they will clearly understand the vocabulary used in the surveys. The body image survey and the after school program survey are assessing what both are designed to assess. The body image survey should evaluate body image perceptions. The after school program questionnaire should determine the number and type of activities students participate in after school.

Limitations

Limitations to the study may be numerous. The students are not randomly chosen to do the study, they will volunteer. This will not ensure that the study is reliable and a generality to the rest of the country. The schools are located in northwestern Wisconsin; which is a mostly Caucasian area of people. The study and the surveys will have to be changed when working with other ethnic backgrounds. Another limitation may be the number of subjects that are volunteering to participate in the study. Most students will be

under age 18 and parents will sign a consent form for them. This could lesson the number of subjects if consent forms are not returned. Finally, there is no control over sample size because students will volunteer to fill out each survey. There may be more than enough people to have a reliable sample size or there may be less. This could cause the study to be less reliable. The validity of the study could also be questioned due to the fact that the study would be difficult to replicate because the subjects are volunteers and other schools across the country are not all the same size or ethnicity. [Other limitations may be found when study is executed and data is analyzed.]

Selection and Description of Sample

The subjects who could be surveyed in this study are both male and female students at the middle and high school levels. The age range can be between 11 and 18 years old or younger. These students attend schools in northwestern Wisconsin. [The population of the town is not yet known. The students will be surveyed in elementary, middle school and high school classes. The number of students to be surveyed is not yet determined, but is expected to be 50 or more.] Students will be asked to volunteer to take the survey in the classes that will be chosen. Each student will need to have parental permission in order to participate in the study. A consent form will be sent home with each student to be signed by a parent or guardian.

Instrumentation

There could be two surveys used in this study to evaluate a relationship between body image, after school program participation and adolescents. The first survey given will be a modified version of the Children's Eating Attitudes Test (ChEAT). [The number of questions for this study's survey has not yet been determined.] Subjects will

answer the survey based on a Likert scale. The choices of answers are: never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always. Students will circle the answer most similar to their feelings about eating and body image. [The author's permission will be needed to use the ChEAT survey as a base to modify.]

The second survey could resemble a questionnaire. This will be designed specifically for the students in the school who are being surveyed to determine how involved they are in after school programs. A list of programs will be obtained from the school office to write into the questionnaire. Students will check off the programs they participate in. If they check off that they are not involved in any programs, there will be other multiple-choice questions to determine why they are not involved. [The questionnaire length will depend on how many programs are offered at the school(s).] No measures of validity or reliability have been tested because this questionnaire is designed solely for this study. The surveys will be no more than two pages in length.

Data Collection

For this study, the researcher should gain permission to conduct the study in two schools in northwestern Wisconsin. There will be a permission slip designed and sent home to the parents of the students who will volunteer to take the surveys. After the signed forms are returned to the researcher, the surveys will be given out in specific classrooms by the researcher or other school officials. [The number of classrooms given surveys has not yet been determined or the number of participants needed.]

The researcher will hand out the survey to each student and then read the directions for completing the survey to the students aloud. Each student will have the opportunity to sign a consent form to participate in the study. At anytime a student can

drop out of the study without completing the survey. At completion, the surveys will be collected from the students. If the students have questions or concerns about the survey they answered, they will be told to seek out a counselor or the researcher. All the classrooms in each school will receive the same course of action.

Data Analysis

The data could be analyzed using the Pearson correlation coefficient to determine if there is a relationship between adolescents and their perceived body image and their participation in after school programs. Gender, grade, and scores on the surveys will be variables examined based on the data results. A *t* test will be used to find differences between these variables. [Other statistics may also be used but are not determined yet until the surveys are finalized.]

Limitations

Limitations of the methodology used in this study may be numerous. The first limitation may be that students could lack understanding of the terms and questions asked in the surveys. If students do not understand the question asked, there is a higher chance that they will not answer the question precisely. A second limitation is that the modified ChEAT survey is shorter than the original ChEAT survey and may not take an accurate view of body image perceptions. The questionnaire may also be an inaccurate representation of how involved students are in after school programs and the reasons why they are not involved in these activities. The third limitation of the study may be the sample selection. The sample may not be large enough to yield valid results. A study that is too small may not show significance toward rejecting or not rejecting the null hypothesis. The fourth limitation may be the selection of the subjects. The students will

most likely be volunteering to participate in the study and are in a northwestern Wisconsin school system. This does not show a representative sample of other students across the U.S or from different ethnic background.