

Body Image Perceptions of Adolescent Males

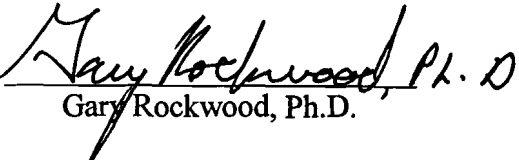
By

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A Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the  
Master of Science Degree  
in

Guidance and Counseling

Approved: 2 Semester Credits

  
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May, 2008

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**Title: *Body Image Perceptions of Adolescent Males***

**Graduate Degree/ Major: MS Guidance and Counseling**

**Research Adviser: Gary Rockwood, Ph.D.**

**Month/Year: May, 2008**

**Number of Pages: 44**

**Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 5<sup>th</sup> edition**

**ABSTRACT**

Body image concerns have been historically viewed as an issue that strictly affects females. However, Furnham, Badmin, and Sneade (2002) suggested that there is evidence that eating disorders and perceptions of body image are increasing in males. Studies have indicated that underweight and overweight adolescent males have reported higher levels of body dissatisfaction compared to normal weight boys. Researchers have suggested that these findings demonstrate the perception that males have regarding being overweight or underweight in western society.

The purpose of this study is to look at the body image perceptions of adolescent males. Thirty-six students from a mid-western middle school voluntarily participated in the study. The Body Image State Scale (BISS) was used to survey the adolescent males. Height and weight was also collected to find the participants body mass index (BMI) for data analysis using t-tests and Pearson's correlations.

The total mean of the participants was in the middle at  $M = 5.11$  on a 9 point likert scale ranging from extremely dissatisfied to satisfied. The means for the individual items of the BISS questionnaire indicated that questions one, three, and five were relatively high while questions two, four, and six had relatively low means. No significant differences were found between BISS and age groups and body mass index (BMI) and age groups. However, significant negative correlations between the BISS score and body mass index (BMI) were found for the total, the 11-12 year old group, and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level indicating that as the BISS score went up the body mass index went down and as the BISS score goes down the body mass index went up. More research is needed to investigate this relatively new issue for adolescent males.

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Acknowledgments

I want to thank Dr. Gary Rockwood for being my advisor and for all his help in completing this project. I want to thank Susan Greene for her help with the statistics and I would like to thank the middle school for letting me collect my data.

I want to give a special thanks to my family and fiancé for all their support and help in my quest to not only finish this project, but for my future career as a school counselor.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

Concerns about body image have been traditionally thought to be a female problem, but that is no longer necessarily true. Just like females, males are bombarded with ideal body images of muscular men through TV, movies, athletics, and magazines such as Sports Illustrated. However, Stout and Frame (2004) explained that the public has a greater awareness of the effects of body image on females compared to males. This awareness allows for a developed sensitivity towards females, but tends to neglect males thoughts and feelings.

According to Ricciardelli, McCabe, Lillis, and Thomas (2006), there has been a sudden interest in males' concern of body image and muscularity within the last decade. Furthermore, Jones and Crawford (2005) stated there is an increasing recognition of the dissatisfaction of body image among adolescent boys. This dissatisfaction and lack of research on body image with males reiterates the importance of discovering the factors that influence this negative perception of body image in males.

Lysne, Engel, Taheri, and Wonderlich (2005) explained that western society portrays the ideal woman as thin. However, there is less known about how the pressures of society affect men regarding body image. Morrison, Kalin, and Morrison (2004) conducted a study that reported that 72% of males and females believe society portrays an ideal body image and shape for males. This study also asked subjects to describe an ideal male body image and 74% stated that it was muscular while 8% said it was slim. In addition to staggering percentages of expectations for the ideal male body image, both genders agreed that males who are muscular are more assertive, athletic, sexually active, confident, and popular.

Explaining that there has been little research done on the effects of mass media on male body image Morrison, Kalin, and Morrison (2004) conducted a study that gives some insight on the growing pressure males receive from society. They conducted a longitudinal assessment of two popular men's fashion magazines. The results of the study confirmed the intensifying pressure from society. They indicated that over a 32-year period from 1960-1992, the number of articles related to building, toning, and strengthening muscles had increased significantly.

In addition to the study confirming the pressure of society, Kolbe and Albaneses (cited in Stout and Frame, 2004) conducted a study to evaluate men when appearing alone in magazines. The sample of magazines used included Rolling Stone and Sports Illustrated, which appeal to the adolescent male population. Kolbe and Albaneses found the majority of males were represented as strong and muscular. This means that adolescent boys are being bombarded with images of the ideal male body image at a time when they are figuring out what type of men they want to be.

Along with the pressures of society, Stout and Frame (2004) explained how peer pressure could affect body image perception. As adolescent males become more aware of the ideal male body image from society, they start to identify problems with themselves and others. Males who do not fit the ideal body image may feel some pressure from their peers who may have a more developed muscular body figure. In a series of interviews with adolescent males conducted by Grogan and Richards (2002), one subject in particular emphasized this peer pressure. According to Grogan and Richards, (2002, p. 229), an adolescent boy named Tom reported that, "If you've got friends who are, like,



quite big in build, you want to be the same as them. Although you might not be able to do anything about it, it's in your conscience all the time.”

With the pressure to have an ideal body image comes health risks. According to Stout and Frame (2004), many people including parents, teachers, coaches, and counselors believe that boys who exercise excessively are just trying to be healthy. However, this is not necessarily the case because most boys are working out for cosmetic reasons. In order to reach the ideal body image males may develop health risks such as muscle dysmorphia, anorexia, bulimia, and other eating disorders.

Stout and Frame (2004) explained that muscle dysmorphia is becoming more prevalent with adolescent males. Males are spending hours and hours in the weight room and are taking supplements to increase muscle mass. Supplements can be a health risk all by themselves. Depending on the supplement, there can be unknown long-term effects that can be harmful to the person using it. However, the adolescent male using supplements may only be worried about the here and now and want to make himself more muscular.

Similar to adolescent females, adolescent males struggle with distorted body image. Jones and Crawford (2005) clarified that muscularity has emerged recently as a central issue of adolescent males for body image. Pressure from both society and peers to have a muscular ideal body image has a negative impact on adolescent males. This negative impact can lead to serious health issues and also psychological issues such as low self-esteem.

### *Statement of the Problem*

As stated earlier, body image concern has been thought of as only a female issue, however, males have similar problems with body image. Males struggle with negative body image perceptions because society portrays the v-shaped muscular body physique as the ideal body leaving males dissatisfied with their own body. The purpose of the present study is to document the body image perceptions of adolescent males aged 11 to 15 attending a mid western middle school. Data was collected in the fall 2007 through the Body Image State Scale (BISS) (Cash, T., Fleming, E., Alindogan, J., Steadman, L., & Whitehead, A. 2002), which consisted of six questions regarding the dissatisfaction/satisfaction with body shape and size. In addition, each subject recorded his height and weight to calculate body mass index to compare to the results of the BISS.

### *Hypotheses*

There are five null hypothesis proposed in this study. They are as follows:

Ho1: There will be no difference in body image perception between age groups.

Ho2: There will be no relationship between subject's age and either the six individual questions or the total score of the BISS.

Ho3: There will be no relationship between subject's grade level and either the six individual questions or the total score of the BISS.

Ho4: There will be no relationship between subject's responses to the BISS questionnaire and the subject's body mass index a) in total, b) when comparing subject's age group or c) grade level.

Ho5: There will be no difference between age groups and body mass index.

### *Definition of Terms*

There are six terms that need to be defined for clarity of understanding. These terms are:

*Adolescents* - The age range for this study will be 12 through 15.

*Body Image* - Body image is defined by Lightstone (2001, p.1) as follows: “body image involves our perception, imagination, emotions, and physical sensations of and about our bodies. It’s not static-but ever changing; sensitive to changes in mood, environment, and physical experience.”

*Ideal Male Body Image* - Stout and Frame (2004) depict the ideal male body image as: strong, muscular, and lean with perfect features.

*Muscle Dysmorphia* - In the journal of athletic training Leone, Sedory, and Gray, (2005) define muscle dysmorphia as an obsession with the body. More specifically, one is dissatisfied with muscularity and tries to achieve more muscle by working out compulsively. Muscle dysmorphia is a subcategory of body dysmorphic disorder.

*Body Dysmorphic Disorder*- The online medical Merriam-Webster dictionary (2008) defines body dysmorphic disorder as a pathological preoccupation with an imagined or slight physical defect of one’s body to the point of causing significant stress of behavioral impairment in several areas (as work and personal relationships).

### *Assumptions of the Study*

The researcher assumes the following:

1. The subjects will answer the questionnaire honestly
2. Adolescent males have a perception of body image

*Limitations of the Study*

The findings of this study may be limited by the following:

1. Measures are self-reported and there may be perceived pressure to respond in a certain way
2. The subjects may not be representative of the population as a whole

## Chapter II: Literature Review

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature on body image perceptions of males. The first section discusses the role society and the media play on the male body image perception. The next section will explain body image, stereotypes and dissatisfaction. The third section will focus on the Adonis complex, which can result from negative perceptions of one's body. The fourth section will conclude with body dysmorphic disorder and muscle dysmorphia .

### *Society and the Media*

Labre (2002) argued that the average American boy spends one-third of each day exposed to media. However, the effects of boys being exposed to the media's muscular ideal body image have not been examined. Even though there is a lack of research on the effects of media and body image, there is evidence that the media's male body image is becoming more muscular. Also there is a relation between an increase in body dissatisfaction and increase in male body image disorders.

Labre (2002) reiterated that standards for beauty in males emphasize strength and muscularity. Boys as young as six years old have an ideal body image and prefer the mesomorphic body type compared to the ectomorphic or endomorphic body types. The mesomorphic body type is described as well proportioned and average build. The ectomorphic body type is thin and the endomorphic body type is fat. The majority of the boys who chose the mesomorphic body type also selected the muscular mesomorphic body type. This body type is described as a body with a v-shaped frame and well-

developed chest, arms, and wide shoulders. Males who have the muscular mesomorphic body type are thought to be more attractive and receive more social benefits.

A study done by Kostanski, Fisher, and Gullone (2004) confirmed the idea of males preferring a more mesomorphic body type. The study looked at current feelings of body image dissatisfaction with the effects of media. The age range that was researched in this study was 12 to 18 years old with a mean age of 14 years of age. The data collected from the study claimed that both the underweight and overweight groups reported higher levels of body dissatisfaction compared to normal weight boys. The authors suggested that these findings demonstrate the perception that males have regarding being overweight or underweight in western society. Furthermore, this perception males have that is enforced by society may be as important of an influence on the male body image dissatisfaction as the well known thin ideal for females.

According to Labre (2002), this ideal male body image can be traced back to the art of ancient Greece and Rome. In the mid-1800s the media emphasis on body image shifted to the female body and that continued until the 1980s. However, the 1980s and 1990s have shown a reemergence of the male body image in media. Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the muscular male body image is portrayed with half-naked men in numerous advertisements and has become common place in western media.

Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia (cited in Labre, 2002) proposed the idea of the muscular male body currently represented in the media as a “hypermale.” This image is only made possible by using anabolic steroids and is not healthy body development. Steroids were first used in the 1940s and 1950s by bodybuilders producing the disproportionate v-shaped muscle body physique.

Furthermore, Labre (2002) indicated that even boy's action figures have developed over time to be more muscular. Current research of Pope, Olivardia, Gruber, and Borowiecki (cited in Stout & Frame, 2004) explored the idea of toys changing over the years to encourage the ideal muscular male body image. The action figure toys display more muscularity than even the top bodybuilders. For example, G.I. Joe in 1964 was only 5'10" in height and had a 32" waist with a 44" chest and 12" biceps. This was attainable for males who would exercise. However, by 1991 G.I. Joe changed to a 29" waist and the biceps increased to 16 1/2". The G.I. Joe resembles the v-shaped body image that the media portrays with the smaller waist, but large arms, chest, and shoulders. Not only have the action figures grown more muscular, but they have gained cut or sharp muscle definition. Since toys like G.I. Joe have a bodybuilder physique, the authors suggested that this type of media affects the body image perceptions of males at a very young age.

Another trend that Labre (2002) discussed is the increase of popularity with weight training machines, gym memberships, and supplements. These trends are widely advertised in health and fitness magazines, which are popular with males. According to the author, these categories of weight training machines and supplements have grown dramatically in the past decade.

In addition to these trends, Labre (2002) explained that fitness magazines for males have grown as well. The original bodybuilding magazines such as *Ironman*, have been replaced by new magazines like *Men's Health*. These new magazines target a wider audience and more importantly these magazines focus on what the author described as beauty. Labre (2002) stated that "the magazines feature muscular males who are as

similar to the average American man as models in women magazines are to average American woman” (p. 234). *Men’s Health* from 1990 to 1997 has grown from 250,000 to more than 1.5 million issues in circulation. In 2000, *Men’s Health* introduced a teenage spin of the same magazine, which targeted the younger population and has had great success.

Chung (2001) argues that it may be more than coincidental that signs of muscle dysmorphia have become more apparent at a time when men’s magazines are titled “Fuel Your Muscles: What to Eat and When to Eat it,” or “Rock Hard. Fat Free. Right Now!” Such articles that are included in these magazines feature celebrities that some males look up too like Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger. These celebrities report that they train for many hours and it is a daily routine. In addition to the men’s magazines, smaller publications like comic books also use the imagery of muscularity, which focus on the younger population.

Some of the other media targets include television and movies. Labre (2002) clarified that adolescent males are among the largest audience who watch wrestling matches, sponsored by the World Wrestling Federation (WWF). These wrestlers look like the definition of the ideal muscular body image. Furthermore, the author provided a study that identified the favorite actors of adolescent males. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jean Claude Van Damme, Sylvester Stallone, Steven Segal, and Wesley Snipes were included in all the adolescent male’s top ten lists. These actors are all muscular and fit the media’s image of the ideal v-shaped muscular body. Interestingly none of these muscular actors on the males list were on the females list of top ten favorite actors supporting that the muscular body image is an important factor for males but not for females.



Chung (2001) states that Arnold Schwarzenegger's rise to fame could have been a turning point in the way men view their bodies. Schwarzenegger is not only featured in popular films like Predator and Terminator, but he was appointed the head of the President's Fitness Council during Ronald Reagan's second term. Chung argues that Schwarzenegger who once was considered freakish by the public is now popular and the ideal male body image.

An episode that was reported in a documentary by The Sports Network (TSN) in Canada (cited in Chung 2001) claimed there was a steroid increase use among teenage males shortly after the Ben Johnson scandal at the 1988 Olympics. According to Chung (2001), young men did not view this as a tragedy, but were more intrigued by how the drugs made it possible. The media reports were very precise on what he took and there was no longer a mystery behind what steroids could do. This example can be related to current scandals that are going on professional sports, especially those in baseball. A specific example is Mark McGuire's publicized use of androstenedione during his quest of the home run record.

#### *Body Image, Stereotypes, and Dissatisfaction*

According to Hinds (2002), body image is the way a person feels about his or her body. Body image is the mental picture a person has about his or her body and includes feelings from facial features to body size. Body image issues can occur when an individual does not like something about his or her body leading to feelings of dissatisfaction. Hinds (2002) explains that no one knows what causes body image problems, but it seems to be a combination of psychological, physical, and social factors.

However, Davis (1999) states that body image is more than just the mental picture one has about his or her body, but it is also a reflection of how one feels about his or her self. Davis (1999) suggests that if one feels bad about his or her life it can translate to feeling bad about his or her own body. Furthermore, when one feels out of control of his or her life, he or she may try to regain control by controlling his or her body. This feeling of dissatisfaction can be influenced by family, friends, and culture.

Cash and Pruzinsky (2002) emphasized the importance of how one perceives one's body image. Body image is an essential part of self esteem, and the image of one's body is considered a reflection of the self. Body image is not only the way one perceives his or her self, but this image is what one believes others see as well. Body image fluctuates constantly and is influenced by life circumstances that include pleasure or pain.

The idea of body image has been thought of as a struggle that only females deal with. However, Furnham, Badmin, and Sneade (2002) suggested that there is evidence that eating disorders and perceptions of body image are increasing in males. In addition to the increasing prevalence of negative body image perceptions, Furnham, Badmin, and Sneade (2002) stated that males are more interested in body shape. The ideal shape according to Furnham, Badmin, and Sneade (2002) includes a v-shaped figure with larger biceps, chest, and shoulders.

Furnham, Badmin, and Sneade (2002) explained that males with poor body image are more likely to perceive themselves as underweight leading to body weight dissatisfaction. The idea of being skinny as bad and the desire to gain weight fits the purpose of having the ideal v-shaped muscular body. This v shaped or "ideal" body also fits the stereotype of what males try to live up to.

Cash and Pruzinsky (2002) explained that “what is beautiful is good” and “what is ugly is bad.” This idea of having a body image that is beautiful and fits society’s image of the ideal male body enforces the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype. Furthermore, those who are considered beautiful or attractive are viewed as being happier, smarter, more sociable, more interesting, and even more successful.

In a recent study, Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) documented how unrealistic males’ body image really is. The age range of the study was males between eleven and seventeen years old. Their study provided evidence for this unrealistic ideal that males believe in. Boys of all ages chose a body ideal that was thirty-five pounds more muscular than their own body type. For most males this image can only be reached with the use of steroids. Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) brought up some disturbing questions. If the majority of boys want a muscular body that only can be attained by steroids, what will happen? Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) suggested that some may turn to anabolic steroids or other dangerous supplements, while others who do not use drugs to become bigger may suffer damage to their self-esteem or emotional well-being. Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) argued that “Today’s boys are at risk” (p. 175).

Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) found quotes from adolescent boys on the Internet explaining their anxieties about body image. For example:

Hello. I am a 13-year-old male. I am no hard body. I think I might be pudgy. But I don’t know because I can’t really ask anybody. I took a body fat test and got 22%. I’m not sure what this means. Is it good, okay, or bad? I used to have a six pack when I was eleven. Since then I lost it. I still have muscle but it seems buried under about a centimeter of fat. I can

pinch about 1.2 inches of it under my belly button. When I sit a big roll appears, leaving a crease on my belly button. Nobody has ever told me that I am fat, but I need somebody's help. Thank you a lot! (p. 173)

This quote is one of many provided by Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) demonstrating this body image dissatisfaction. These young boys have feelings of being too ashamed or embarrassed to talk to anybody. The quote above explained this very phenomenon about having no one to talk to or not feeling comfortable enough to talk to anyone. Most of these boys continue to suffer and worry about their body image. In addition to these boys suffering, many parents, teachers, and coaches are unaware of the problem. Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) stated that "body dissatisfaction is commonplace and increasing among boys" (p. 174).

### *Adonis Complex*

According to Darkes (1995) the Adonis complex is not a medical term, but is an umbrella term that describes a variety of body image concerns of males. These concerns range from minor issues to more obsessive and even life-threatening obsessions. This term is from Greek mythology where Adonis who is half man and god is considered the ultimate in masculine beauty. Adonis' body is represented as the ultimate male physique.

Pope (2001) claims that the Adonis complex has become more prevalent. Going to the gym to work or running on the treadmill was not as popular for the older generations of males. A generation ago high school boys did not use nutritional supplements like protein powder, amino acids, and creatine. In addition to supplements, cosmetic surgery for men was almost unheard of and the term six-pack abdominal muscles was not used. The muscular icons of the older generation looked like John

Wayne, Gregory Peck, or James Dean. These icons are lacking in muscular build compared to the superheroes of modern icons.

The Adonis complex according to Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) is a combination of all forms of body obsessions. It affects males of all ages and even young boys. Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) provide recent studies that have shown elementary aged boys are already dissatisfied with their bodies and this dissatisfaction might lead to low self-esteem or depression. Males of all ages in unprecedented numbers are becoming more and more preoccupied with the appearance of their body. Furthermore, males choose not to talk openly about their body dissatisfaction because they have been taught through society that they should not worry about their body image or to share feelings.

However, Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) argued that there is a crisis beneath all this and males are sacrificing for the ideal v-shaped muscular body. They are compulsively exercising to gain a bigger chest or the six pack abs. Others are spending billions of dollars on muscle and food supplements.

The Adonis complex produces many body image problems in different males. These disorders can range from muscle dysmorphia to abnormal eating behaviors. The abnormal eating behaviors include anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Most people are familiar with anorexia and bulimia, but more recently researchers have added binge-eating disorder. Binge-eating is described as people who binge eat, but do not purge or vomit after eating (Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia 2000).

Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) clarify that binge eating is the biggest male eating problem. Males who binge eat have a negative body image perception and feel

self-depreciation that occurs with all eating disorders. Males who binge eat gain weight, but try to counter it with exercise.

Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) provided an example of binge eating in a male named Jeremy. He would have late-night binges that consisted of:

A tube of vanilla frosting, several handfuls of raw cookie dough, four bags of Doritos, and a dozen Mars bars. Jeremy said afterwards that I could not go to sleep with that much food in my stomach, so I would go for runs at midnight. (p. 140)

Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) explained that eating disorders are becoming more and more common in males. Some thoughts behind this changing of events are the standards of society of the male body image. Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia (2000) stated that “the ideal male body image in our society has not only gained muscle but has also lost fat over the last few decades” (p. 129).

#### *Body Dysmorphic Disorder and Muscle Dysmorphia*

According to Schnirring (2000) muscle dysmorphia is a term that surfaced in the medical literature in 1997 and is thought to be a form of body dysmorphic disorder. The fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (cited in Schnirring, 2000) defines body dysmorphic disorder as an intense dissatisfaction with imagined ugliness of a specific body part. Experts on muscle dysmorphia Pope, Gruber, and Choi (cited in Schnirring, 2000) define muscle dysmorphia as a preoccupation with the misperception that muscles are small despite sufficient muscularity.

Oyama, Paltoo, and Greengold (2007) state that body dysmorphic disorder involves a consistent preoccupation with physical defect, real or imagined. Any real

physical defects tend to be slight, but the person will obsess over them. For example a man who feels he has smaller shoulders might wear multiple layers of clothes or sweatshirts to make himself look and feel bigger.

Body dysmorphic disorder is a somatoform disorder according to Oyama, Paltoo, and Greengold (2007). A somatoform disorder is described as:

A group of psychiatric disorders in which patients present a myriad of clinically significant but unexplained physical symptoms. These disorders often cause significant emotional distress for patients and are a challenge to physicians. (p. 1333)

According to Phillips and Castle (2001) body dysmorphic disorder or dysmorphophobia is a more severe form of a body image disturbance. Body dysmorphic disorder affects just as many women as men. Men with body dysmorphic disorder are more commonly obsessed with their skin, hair, genitals, and nose. Most men demonstrate repetitive and time-consuming behaviors in an attempt to fix their dissatisfaction. This consists of mirror checking, covering areas of concern, and constant grooming.

Miller (2005) states that body dysmorphic disorder is probably more common than most people think because those with this disorder tend to try and hide their problem. Miller (2005) claims that the rate of this disorder is around 2% of the general population. Up to half of the people with body dysmorphic disorder seek cosmetic surgery or dermatology treatment. These treatments tend to leave one feeling worse about his or her body, and this may lead to depression. For men, body dysmorphic disorder takes the special form called muscle dysmorphia.

Choi and Pitts (2003) suggested that the idea of popular male beauty has changed. There is greater emphasis on being muscular, which is considered more acceptable and desirable. The desire to be more muscular is positively related to the increase of weight training, which improves body satisfaction. However, this need to exercise to reach the ideal body image could ultimately lead to negative health behaviors. These negative health behaviors might include exercise dependence, steroid misuse, and muscle dysmorphia. Roberto Olivardia, an expert on muscle dysmorphia, (cited in Schnirring, 2000) says that more than half of his patients use steroids. He also adds that along with steroid use, the use of supplements is almost universal with those who experience muscle dysmorphia.

Schnirring (2000) states that mental health professionals are noticing a shift in why men build muscle. A recent survey done by Pope, Gruber, and Mangweth (2000) of Austrian, French, and American men identified the ideal men's body weight as about twenty-eight pounds more muscular than their own weight. Working out with weights can produce health benefits and build self-esteem. However, Schnirring (2000) claims that health professionals and physicians are noticing that more males are following into the categories of body obsessions, eating disorders, steroid use, and muscle dysmorphia.

Furthermore, muscle dysmorphia incorporates a specific dissatisfaction with muscularity instead of looking at the body as a whole leaving the individual with a disagreement between the imagined and actual self. This focus on the flaw of not being muscular enough preoccupies someone to the point that the person becomes depressed and obsessed, leading to loss of relationships or jobs.



Leone et al. (2005) went on to state that individuals with this disorder have a feeling of muscle inadequacy, when in fact they are not inadequate. In addition to the feelings of muscle inadequacy, individuals will compulsively work out. For example, an individual may spend long periods of time in the gym, spend a lot of money on supplements, illustrate deviant eating patterns, and even substance abuse.

In addition to feelings of inadequacy, men with muscle dysmorphia sacrifice activities because of the compulsive feeling of maintaining workout schedules or diet schedules (Cash and Pruzinsky 2002). This preoccupation interferes with all aspects of life. Cash and Pruzinsky (2002) explain that males with this preoccupation have missed important events, sacrificed relationships and careers. These men may avoid situations where their body would be exposed to others or wear layers of clothing to appear more muscular.

A recent study of muscle dysmorphia done by Olivarida, Pope, and Hudson (cited in Schnirring 2000) offers some guidance on how to recognize the conditions of muscle dysmorphia. The study consisted of twenty-four men with muscle dysmorphia and thirty controls. The study found that those with muscle dysmorphia were more likely to:

Respond that they were totally or mostly dissatisfied with they body, have higher rates of current or past major mood, anxiety, or eating disorders, spend more than three hours per day thinking about their muscularity, avoid activities and people because of their perceived body defect, report little or no control over compulsive weight lifting and dietary patterns, and relinquish activities that were formerly enjoyable. (p. 20)

Leone et al. (2005) explained that muscle dysmorphia could affect anyone; however it is more prevalent in males. With the pressures to have a more muscular physique, Leone et al. (2005) declared that children of younger ages are at risk to develop muscle dysmorphia. Leone et al. (2005) did a study to reiterate this developing issue of muscle dysmorphia. The study was with adolescent boys and they were presented with body types, which were generated on computer. Each of the boys was asked three questions. The first question asked what would you like your body to look like? The second question asked what do you think the ideal body image should look like? Finally, the third question asked what do you think your body looks like? The results of the study confirmed the idea of males wanting a larger muscular body type. The boys selected body types that were 30 to 40 pounds heavier. Also for the last question the boys perceived their bodies as thinner and weaker than they actually were. One interesting comment made was one of the boys asked if they could make the largest image bigger. This study provided evidence of this distorted perception of an ideal body image.

As stated previously, Grogan (1999) argues that there is a general consensus that most men aspire to have the v-shaped body characterized as having a slim waist with developed muscles on the chest, arms, and shoulders. This idea of having the ideal muscular shape is tied to the western cultural through media and society. According to the western cultural the muscular ideal identifies with power, strength, and aggression.

Leone, Sedory, and Gray (2005) reiterate that in American society females are encouraged to be thin, but male's ideal is to be muscular. This trend for males is what Leone et al. (2005) believes leads to a condition called reverse anorexia. The focus is not getting thin, but rather how large and muscular a person can reach. This body

dissatisfaction can lead to disorders such as muscle dysmorphia. Grieve (2007) reiterates how media and society conveys the impossible body standards through movies, television, and magazines. Males tend to feel the pressure of the impossible body standards leaving some males resorting excessive lifting of weights or illegal supplements. Lastly, and most significantly for this study, society contributes to negative body image by setting a unrealistic standard for young males to reach, forcing some males to revert to drastic measures to reach the ideal v-shaped body and affecting other males with a negative body image and self-esteem.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the perceptions of body image in pre-adolescent and early adolescent males through the use of the Body Image States Scales as the testing instrument. The BISS and the procedures of the study will be discussed further in the next chapter.

### Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology used in this study. The first section explains the description of the subjects and how they were chosen. The next section describes the instrumentation used. In addition, the data collection procedure and data analysis are discussed. Finally, the chapter concludes with discussion of the methodology limitations.

#### *Subject Selection and Description*

The subjects for this study were male adolescent students in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade attending a mid-western middle school. The researcher went into the classrooms to explain the purpose of the questionnaire and ask for volunteers to participate in the study. Since the subjects were not able to consent, those who participated had to have their parents sign a consent form before being able to participate. There were a total of thirty-six male subjects from each of the grade levels that volunteered to participate with a signed consent form.

#### *Instrumentation*

The Body Image State Scale (BISS) was used for this study. The BISS is a short questionnaire that consists of six questions. The six questions investigate the subject's perception of their physical appearance at a certain moment in time. The six questions were based on a nine point Likert scale and the scales were presented in a negative-to-positive direction for half the items and positive-to-negative for the other half. According to Cash, Fleming, Alindogan, Steadman, and Whithead (2002) the questions of the BISS consisted of: 1) dissatisfaction/satisfaction with body shape and size; 2) dissatisfaction/satisfaction with one's overall appearance; 3) dissatisfaction/satisfaction

with one's weight; 4) feelings of physical attractiveness/unattractiveness; 5) current feelings about one's looks relative to how one usually feels; and 6) evaluation of one's appearance relative to how the average person looks.

Cash, Fleming, Alindogan, Steadman, and Whithead (2002) developed and validated the six-item BISS. The authors confirmed the stability of the BISS through the use of test-retest reliability. The time consisted of a 2- to 3-week period and the coefficient was .68 for men ( $p < .001$ ). The BISS is appropriately correlated with various trait measures of body image. The Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS), Appearance Schemas Inventory (ASI), and subjects' body mass index (BMI) have a significant positive correlation with the BISS. The BISS is sensitive for positive versus negative situational contexts. Furthermore, Cash, Fleming, Alindogan, Steadman, and Whithead (2002) examined the construct validity through experiment on "reactivity to appearance-related information as a function of level of dysfunctional body-image investment" (p. 109).

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

Data was collected in the fall of 2007 at a mid-western middle school. The students who voluntarily participated in the research brought the consent form home to get a parent or guardians signature. There was a room in the middle school on a set date for all the participants to meet at to take the questionnaire. The subjects were told that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that they may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences. Also, should a subject choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, the subject could discontinue participation at any time

without adverse consequences. The overall process to complete the BISS was about ten minutes.

### *Data Analysis*

The data was analyzed using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS). The subjects were split up into two age groups ranging from 11-12 and 12.5-15, as well as grade levels 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup>. One t-test focused on differences between BISS scores and age groups. A second t-test examined differences between body mass index (BMI) and age groups. Pearson's r correlations were used to see if there were any statistically significant relationships between age and BISS total and individual scores and grade and BISS total and individual scores. Pearson's r correlations were also used to see if there were statistically significant relationships between BISS scores and subjects' body mass index score for the total group, for age groups, and for grade levels.

### *Limitations*

One of the limitations of this study is the limited number of subjects that participated in the study. This small sample size may not be representative of the entire adolescent male population. Another limitation is that the subjects that participated in this study were all from one middle school in the Midwest. Therefore the results of this study should be used cautiously and may not generalize to all male adolescents. Finally, there has been limited research conducted on the BISS, but it has evidence supporting its reliability and validity.

## Chapter IV: Results

This chapter will summarize the data collected using the BISS questionnaire and also subjects' body mass index. The statistics used to analyze the data will be described in table format. The research questions analyzed pre adolescent and early adolescent male feelings toward their body, weight, and physical appearance.

There were a total of thirty-six participants for this study. The participants filled out the Body Image State Scale (BISS), which had a total of six questions on a nine point likert scale. The scale ranged from extremely dissatisfied to extremely satisfied. Participants also provided their grade level as well as their age and height to find their body mass index. The participants' total mean for the BISS questionnaire was  $M = 5.11$ . This shows that overall, the participant's body image concerns were neither extremely satisfied nor dissatisfied, but rather average. In regards to body image satisfaction the participants means were relatively high for questions 1 (dissatisfied or satisfied with my physical appearance,  $M = 7.28$ ), 3 (dissatisfied or satisfied with my weight,  $M = 6.81$ ), and 5 (feel better or worse about my looks than I usually feel,  $M = 6.08$ ) indicating that the participants are satisfied with their appearance, weight and are accepting of their looks. However, results revealed a relatively low mean for questions 2 (dissatisfied or satisfied with my body size and shape,  $M = 3.31$ ), 4 (physically attractive/unattractive,  $M = 3.17$ ), and 6 (better or worse than the average person looks,  $M = 4.03$ ) indicating that the participants were dissatisfied with size, shape, and overall attraction compared to the average person.

***Ho1: There will be no difference in body image perception between age groups***

***(11 to 12 versus 12.5 to 15).***

**Table 1**

*t-test Comparing the BISS Scores Among the Age Groups*

Group	M	SD	df	t	p
11-12	5.14	.63	34	.399	.693
12.5-15	5.06	.60			

The subjects were split up into age groups 11- 12 year olds (n=22) and 12.5-15 year olds (n=14). The data for body image perception did not produce any significant differences between age groups 11-12 ( $M = 5.14$ ) and 12.5-15 ( $M = 5.06$ ) (see Table 1). As a result the null hypothesis was not rejected.

***Ho2: There will be no relationship between subject's age and either the six***

***individual questions or the total score of the BISS.***

**Table 2**

*The Pearson's Correlation Between Age and BISS*

	N	r	p
Total	36	-.068	.693

**Table 3**

*Pearson Correlation Between Age and the Six Individual Items of the BISS*

BISS questions	1	2	3	4	5	6
r	.102	.151	.171	-.137	-.049	-.055
p	.55	.381	.320	.427	.777	.749

Data analysis of the relationship between subject's age and either the six individual questions or the total score reveals no significant relationships. The total correlation was -.068 between age and BISS score (see Table 2). The correlation of age with the individual questions include 1 (dissatisfied or satisfied with my physical appearance,  $r = .102$ ), 2 (dissatisfied or satisfied with my body size and shape,  $r = .151$ ),



3 (dissatisfied or satisfied with my weight,  $r = .171$ ), 4 (physically attractive/unattractive,  $r = -.137$ ), 5 (better or worse about my looks than I usually feel,  $r = -.049$ ), and 6 (better or worse than the average person looks,  $r = -.055$ ). None of the correlations with age and the individual BISS questions was statistically significant (see Table 3). As a result, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

***Ho3: There will be no relationship between subject's grade level and either the six individual questions or the total score of the BISS.***

**Table 4**  
*The Pearson's Correlation Between Grade and BISS*

	N	r	p
Total	36	.000	1.00

**Table 5**  
*Pearson Correlation Between Grade and the Six Individual Items of the BISS*

<i>BISS questions</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
r	.015	.122	-.072	-.018	-.043	-.046
p	.933	.479	.677	.916	.804	.789

The third hypothesis, which looks at a relationship between the subject's grade level, and either the individual questions or the total score of the BISS could not be rejected through this data analysis. The analysis of the data revealed that the correlation between grade and BISS score was  $r = .000$  (see Table 4). The individual questions correlation include 1 (dissatisfied or satisfied with my physical appearance,  $r = .015$ ), 2 (dissatisfied or satisfied with my body size and shape,  $r = .122$ ), 3 (dissatisfied or satisfied with my weight,  $r = -.072$ ), 4 (physically attractive/unattractive,  $r = -.018$ ), 5 (better or worse about my looks than I usually feel,  $r = -.043$ ), and 6 (better or worse than

the average person looks,  $r = -.046$ ) (see Table 5). None was found to be statistically significant.

***Ho4: There will be no relationship between subject's responses to the BISS questionnaire and the subject's body mass index a) in total, b) when comparing subject's age group or c) grade level.***

**Table 6**  
*The Pearson's Correlation Between BISS Questionnaire and Subject's Body Mass Index*

Group	N	r	p
Total	36	-.417	.011*
11-12	22	-.510	.015*
12.5-15	14	-.222	.445
6 <sup>th</sup> grade	16	-.667	.005**
7 <sup>th</sup> grade	10	.049	.892
8 <sup>th</sup> grade	10	-.170	.638

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $P < .01$

As identified in Table 4, the entire group and the 11-12 year olds were found to have a statistically significant negative correlation between the BISS questionnaire and BMI, significant at the  $p < .05$  level. The total group showed a correlation of  $-.417$  and the 11-12 year old group showed a correlation of  $-.510$ . The 6<sup>th</sup> grade were also found to have a significant negative correlation between the BISS questionnaire and BMI of  $-.667$  at the  $p < .01$  (see Table 6). As a result, the null hypothesis can be rejected for the total group, for 11-12 year olds, and for sixth graders.

***Ho5: There will be no difference between age groups and body mass index.***

**Table 7**  
*t-test Comparing BMI Difference Between the Age Groups*

Group	M	SD	df	t	p
11-12	20.44	3.87	34	.250	.804
12.5-15	20.15	2.72			

In order to examine whether BMI differences between 11-12 year olds versus 12.5-15 year olds may have accounted for the differences in the correlations between BISS scores and BMI for the different age groups, a t-test was conducted to examine whether there were any BMI differences between the two groups. The data for body mass index did not produce any significant differences between age groups 11-12 ( $M = 20.44$ ) and 12.5-15 ( $M = 20.15$ ) (see Table 7). As a result the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Overall, the total mean of the participants was in the middle at  $M = 5.11$  on a 9 point likert scale ranging from extremely dissatisfied to satisfied. The mean of questions one, three, and five were relatively high while questions two, four, and six had relatively low means. The t-tests examined the difference between BISS and age groups and body mass index (BMI) and age groups. The t-tests did not produce any significant differences and the null hypotheses was not rejected. For hypothesis two (There will be no relationship between subject's age and either the six individual questions or the total score of the BISS) and three (There will be no relationship between subject's grade level and either the six individual questions or the total score of the BISS) there was no correlation between either age and BISS or grade and BISS. However, for hypothesis four (There will be no relationship between subject's responses to the BISS questionnaire and the subject's body mass index a) in total, b) when comparing subject's age group or c) grade level) significant negative correlations were found for the total, the 11-12 year old group, and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level.

## Chapter V: Discussion

This chapter provides a summary and conclusions that can be drawn from the research. Limitations of the research will be addressed, concluding with recommendations for the future.

### *Summary*

Body image issues have been a recognized problem for females for centuries, but there has been growing awareness recently of males being affected as well. The male body image has changed over the years, but currently the ideal v-shaped muscle body type has had negative implications on some males trying to attain this image. This paper examined previous research on the Adonis Complex, body dysmorphia, and muscle dysmorphia in males (Darkes, 1995; Pope, 2001; Schnirring, 2000; Oyama, Paltoo, and Greengold, 2007; Phillips and Castle, 2001; Miller, 2005; Choi and Pitts, 2003; Leone et al., 2005). The Adonis Complex, body dysmorphia, and muscle dysmorphia are all conditions that define the effects of body image concerns pertaining to lack of muscle and meeting the societies v-shaped body physique. The effects of media and society on male body image perceptions were addressed (Labre, 2002; Kostanski, Fisher, and Gullone, 2004; Stout, and Frame, 2004; Chung, 2001). Media and society are factors that affect the overall concern of some male's body image concerns. Body image, stereotypes, and dissatisfaction were also discussed (Hinds, 2002; Davis, 1999; Cash and Pruzinsky, 2002; Furnham, Badmin, and Sneade, 2002); Pope, Phillips, and Olivardia, 2000). This particular research focuses on the body image concerns related to male stereotypes and dissatisfaction with body size and shape.

As previously stated some adolescent males have body image dissatisfaction. Furnham, Badmin, and Sneade (2002) suggest that there is evidence that eating disorders and perceptions of body image are increasing in males. Labre (2002) explains how society and media also plays a factor in emphasizing strength and muscularity. Boys as young as six years old have an idea of body image and prefer the mesomorphic body type compared to the ectomorphic or endomorphic body types (Labre, 2002).

The purpose of the present study was to examine pre adolescent and early adolescent male perceptions of their body image. Thirty-six male students from a mid-western middle school participated in the study. The Body Image States Scales (BISS) was used as the testing instrument to gather feelings about their bodies at a specific time. There was no relationship between either age and BISS or grade and BISS. The total mean of the participants was average, whereas the mean of questions one, three, and five were relatively high and questions two, four, and six had relatively low means. The BISS scores were compared with the participant's body mass index to reveal a significant negative relationship. This relationship when investigated closer showed that the result of the significant negative correlation was due to the males either in 6<sup>th</sup> grade or 11-12 year olds. A t-test found that there was no difference between either the BISS scores and age groups and another found no difference between BMI and age groups. This strengthens the results of the correlation between BISS scores and BMI because there are no differences between BISS scores and age groups or BMI and age groups.

### *Conclusions*

Overall the mean of the BISS questions for the entire sample of students showed some interesting results. The total mean for the entire sample was right in the middle or

around average. For question 1 (dissatisfied or satisfied with my physical appearance), 3 (dissatisfied or satisfied with my weight), and 5 (better or worse about my looks than I usually feel) the mean was relatively high. However, the other three questions revealed relatively low means for questions 2 (dissatisfied or satisfied with my body size and shape), 4 (physically attractive/unattractive), and 6 (better or worse than the average person looks). It may be assumed that male students' are satisfied with their looks, but feel dissatisfied with their overall body size and shape. This correlates with the previous research of males struggling to fit the ideal v-shaped body image.

There was no relationship between age and either the six individual questions or the total score of the BISS. Also there was no relationship between the subject's grade level and either the six individual questions or the total score of the BISS. There were no differences between either the BISS scores and age groups or BMI and age groups.

However, data suggests that there was a statistically significant negative relationship between scores on the BISS and body mass index for the students involved in the study, suggesting that when the male students scored higher on the BISS their BMI tended to be lower and when the scores on the BISS were lower the BMI tended to be higher. However, it is interesting to note that when splitting the students up into groups of 11-12 year old and 12.5-15 year old groups only the 11-12 year old group had a significant negative relationship. This was also true with grade levels. For 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade the only grade that had a statistically significant negative relationship were those students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The results suggest that the some 11-12 year old male students or those in 6<sup>th</sup> grade tend to have more body image concerns. This tends to be a developmental time for pre adolescent males and they may be confused or unsure of

themselves leading to more of these body image concerns. Therefore, the media and society may have stronger influences on this age group.

This relates to previous literature of having a negative body image perception when being overweight. The literature suggests that males do not want to be overweight or underweight, but have the mesomorphic body type. The data did not suggest that if males were underweight that they had dissatisfaction with their body image. This was different from what the literature proposed.

#### *Limitations*

This particular study consisted of a small population of thirty-six students from a mid-western middle school. Furthermore, the data was only collected from one school. Since there was a small sample and the sample was only from one middle school the results are limited. One should proceed with caution when generalizing results of research to the entire population because of a smaller sample size as well as a single geographical location.

#### *Recommendations*

Recommendations for future research as well as implications for school counselors will be addressed. The amount of research available on male body image issues is limited, therefore future research is needed. Even though this current study was limited with sample size and geographical location, it found a significant negative relationship between body mass index and scores on the BISS, especially for male students within the age group of 11-12 year olds or in 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

Given the results of the study one suggestion could be for counselors to implement a lesson or run groups on body image for males, especially with male students

who are around the ages 11-12 or in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. This particular age group revealed an interesting significant relationship between feelings of body image (BISS scores) and body mass index. The data suggests that male students in this age group need to be addressed with body image concerns and counselors, who work with the personal/social issues, should not overlook male body image and media effects on the age group. This is especially true for males in this age group who are overweight. Counseling on helping to accept current body image could be very helpful for males at this point in their development.

This particular study researched a small population. Another recommendation would be to use a larger sample size as well as participants from different geographical locations. A larger sample size from multiple locations may reveal that male students of other age groups have body image concerns. It would also be beneficial to see if the results would be different with male students of different ethnic origins. Perhaps body image is more an issue or concern with different populations.

The subjects of this study were strictly from 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Since there was significant data at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level it maybe true that body image concerns start earlier. Perhaps doing a similar study of earlier grade levels or age groups to see when body image concerns become an issue would reveal different results. This would help counselors and those who work with male adolescents to focus in on a certain grade or age to address initial body image concerns.



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