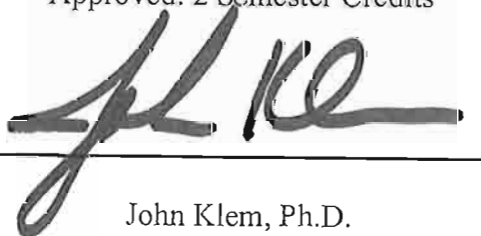Relationship Between Body Image and Self-Esteem

Among Adolescent Girls

By

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ABSTRACT

This review outlines the present research on the relationship between body image and self-esteem among adolescent girls. The research shows that the relationship between body image and self-esteem is important for adolescent girls McCabe, M., & Ricciardelli, L. (2003). Adolescent girls are looked at in different case studies to see what causes them to believe they need to be thin. Furthermore, current literature supports four subtypes of causes that are explored thoroughly in this review that deal with a significant relationship with body image and self-esteem.

However, more research needs to be conducted for this review. There is a lack of finding other influences that cause adolescent girls to have a negative outlook on their own body, which causes low self-esteem.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Having a distorted view of one's body has been linked to low self-esteem among adolescent girls, which in turn has been linked to the development of eating disordered behavior (Croll, 2005, Women's Health, 2007, & Field et al., 2001). Research indicated that between "50-88% of adolescent girls feel negatively about their body shape or size" (Croll, 2005, p. 155), while "49% of teenage girls say they know someone with an eating disorder" (Croll, 2005, p. 155). Furthermore, only 33% of girls say they are the right weight for their bodies, while 58% want to lose weight" (Croll, 2005, p. 154).In comparison to males, females are much more likely to think their current size is too large (66% versus 21%) (Croll, 2005, p. 154) at least in part because they are exposed to thin models on television, magazines and movies Lastly, it is indicated that for girls, "the way I look" is the most important indicator of self-worth (American Association of University Women, 1994). During puberty, some girls go through an "awkward" phase as their bodies begin to change, and they become self-conscious. In another survey by the American Association of University Women (1994), "only 29% of the adolescent girls surveyed expressed self-satisfaction, while more than half of the boys felt good about themselves. From these statistics it is not surprising that "research has linked adolescents' body image, specifically body dissatisfaction, with the prevalence of eating disorders and dieting" (Ata, Ludden, & Lally, 2006, p. 1025).

It has been said that more than half of teenage girls are or think they should be on diets, especially when they go through puberty (Women's Health, 2007). This makes sense, because many young females experience weight gain as puberty begins. This leads many young women to desire to lose the weight in an effort to conform to societal expectations (Women's Health, 2007). Current research supports this assertion, as the development of body-image concerns may be partially attributed to the influence of such societal factors such as family, the media, and

peers (Croll, 2005). In 2006, Ata, Ludden, & Lally conducted a study on the effects of gender, family, friends, and media influences and whether it influenced an adolescent's body image. They found that 61.7% of adolescent females were trying to lose weight. They also mention that "self-esteem, pressures from the media, influences of friends and family, social support and how adolescent girls feel their parents are unsupportive, teasing, and pressure are the main factors on why adolescent girls become insecure and have a decrease of self-esteem towards their body." (Ata, Ludden, & Lally, 2006).

Regarding the media's influence, on average, "adolescents watch an average of 28 hours television per week; American youth spend, on average, 900 hours a year in school and an average of 1,023 hours a year watching television" (Croll, 2005, p. 156). Croll (2005) continues to note that the average child is exposed to more than 20,000 commercials per year, and that nearly 75% of adolescents view music videos at a rate of six hours per week. These observations are extremely concerning for those who work with adolescents, as advertisers often emphasize sexuality and the importance of physical attractiveness in their efforts to sell products. Researchers believe that this type of advertising could place excessive pressure on young children and adolescents to focus on their appearance more critically (American Association of University of Women, 1994). Additionally, younger girls experiencing the profound physical and hormonal changes puberty brings can be greatly impacted by persuasive marketing tactics (American Association of University Women, 1994).

Currently, eight million individuals in the United States suffer from an eating disorder. 90% are women or girls, 80% or preadolescents are afraid of being fat, more than 50% of 10-year-old girls wish they were thinner, and 42% of girls in first through third grades want to be thinner (Women's' Self-Esteem, 2007). This is especially alarming as eating-disordered

behavior, specifically Anorexia Nervosa, has one of the highest mortality rates of the mental disorders listed in the DMN-IV-TR (Women's' Self-Esteem, 2007 & Croll, 2005).

From all the above statistics, it is clear that counselors who choose to work with adolescents must be fully prepared to deal with the both body- image issues and keenly aware of how eating disorder behavior manifests and is maintained within adolescent culture.

Statement of the Problem

Having a distorted body image among adolescent girls has been linked to the development of dysfunctional eating patterns and even disorders such as Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, or Binge Eating Disorder (Ata, et al., 2006). Self-esteem is an important factor, as the research shows it directly relates to one's body image and how adolescent girls perceive themselves. Also, self-esteem corresponds with emotional and psychological development, which can affect an adolescent girl in a positive or negative way. Puberty for girls brings with it characteristics often perceived as less laudable, as girls generally get rounder and have increased body fat. These changes can serve to further enhance dissatisfaction among adolescent girls (Ata et al., 2006). Going through puberty later or earlier than peers also can affect body image as well as psychological health. Some girls can become very self-conscious about their weight, which can cause a decrease in their self-esteem. During that time, girls are vulnerable and sensitive (Ata et al., 2006). Girls who get picked on for being overweight or underweight could be driven into gaining or losing weight in an unhealthy way, as research has found a correlation between body image and self-esteem among early adolescent age groups (Davison & McCabe, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the literature review was to investigate whether a relationship exists between body image and self-esteem among adolescent girls.

Research Questions

There are several questions this study attempts to answer. They include:

1. What are the factors that influence body image among adolescent girls?

2. What is the relationship between body image and self-esteem among adolescent girls?

3. How does body image and self-esteem influence the development of eating disordered behavior?

4. What are the implications for school counselors in working with girls with body- image and self-esteem related issues?

Definition of Terms

Four terms need to be defined for clarity and understanding of this study. They are:

Adolescence – Emotional, physical, psychological, and social changes of a girl and a boy. It's the transitional period of development between youth and maturity that usually occurs between the ages of 12 and 16 for girls and 14 and 18 for boys (Davidson & McCabe, 2006).

Body image – Evaluating one's own body subjectively through linked feelings and attitudes (Duncan, Woodsfield, O'Neill, & Al-Naked, 2002).

Self-esteem – An evaluative element of how a person values, supports, approves or disapproves him or herself (Frost & McKelvie, 2005).

Eating Disorder Behavior - the relentless and obsessive search for weight loss through extreme dieting, which results in an unbalanced nutrition both quantitatively and qualitatively (Boschi, et al., 2003).

Assumptions & Limitations of the Study

The researcher assumed that there will be sufficient research on the relationship between body image and self-esteem among adolescent girls. Also, it is assumed that previous research has been done on several influences that make adolescent girls believe they are fat, need to diet, or become saddened by their appearance.

Possible limitations of this review are the lack of information about other influences that cause adolescents to have low self-esteem, and the amount of information available about the main influences may be lacking as well. These two limitations could hinder this study.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Poor body image and lower levels of self-esteem are clearly documented in the literature as significant causes for concerns among adolescent girls (Croll, 2005, Marcotte et. al, 2002, & Women's Health, 2007). This chapter will begin with a discussion of the self-esteem and body image and then outline four areas of adolescence that influence the development of both self-esteem and body image. The first area outlined will be the impact of physical and emotional development on self-esteem and body image. This chapter then will outline the influence of family, followed by an analysis of how the influence of media and peers impact self-esteem and body image. The chapter will conclude with how each of these factors can be considered within the context of the counseling process.

Self-Esteem and Body Image

"Self-esteem is so intrinsically linked to thoughts about one's body that physical appearance has consistently been found to be the number one predictor of self-esteem at many ages" (Ata, Ludden, & Lally, 2006, p. 1024). According to Rosenberg (1965) (cited in Clay, Vignoles, and Dittmar, 2005), "self esteem is defined as a ''positive or negative attitude toward . . . the self'' (p. 30). Another definition of body image is; evaluating one's own body subjectively through linked feelings and attitudes (Duncan, Woodfield, O'Neill, & Al-Nakeeb, 2002). Frost and McKelvie (2005), define self-esteem "as the level of global regard one has for the self" (p. 36). Self-esteem does contribute to poorer body image and eating disorder symptoms (Green & Pritchard, 2003), and studies are still trying to figure out how to hinder adolescent girls' beliefs that they need to be extremely skinny to look attractive. Adolescent girls can also have low self-esteem through family and media influence (Green & Pritchard, 2003).

Body image is closely related to self-esteem. Body image is defined: An evaluative element of how a person values, supports, approves or disapproves him or herself (Frost & McKelvie, 2005). Also, body image refers to the picture that individuals form of their bodies in their minds. A person's body image is influenced by their beliefs and attitudes. One's body image does not remain the same, but changes in response to lifestyle events (Women's Health, 2007). According to Davidson & McCabe (2006), a poor body image may hamper adolescents' development of interpersonal skills and positive relations with other boys and girls" (p. 17). For instance, "physical attractiveness has been found to impact on peer relationships all the way back from elementary school, with attractive girls engaging in more positive social interactions than less-attractive girls. Ricciardelli & McCabe (2001), (cited in Davidson & McCabe, 2006) "addressed that there is a relationship between body image and psychological functioning during adolescence" (p. 17). Lastly, they found a strong association between body image concerns and low self-esteem among adolescent girls, which has lead to constructions of body image as an important aspect of female self-esteem (Davidson & McCabe, 2006).

Adolescence

Adolescence and puberty bring a variety of physical, social and emotional changes. Furthermore, there is evidence that the body changes that occur during puberty for females can be more of a struggle than for boys (Davidson & McCabe, 2006). When boys go through puberty, their increase in body size results in a physique closer to the muscular male cultural ideal, and so puberty is a more positive experience for boys than for girls (Davidson & McCabe, 2006). However, it's very likely that boys who are considerably underweight or overweight that do not gain the muscle bulk during puberty experience considerable body-image concerns, but

they usually don't experience as much influence from the media and family as females. (Davidson & McCabe, 2006).

Along with the physical, emotional and social changes adolescents' experience, they also undergo changes in relationships. Adolescence can be a confusing time, as peer and family relationships contribute to how teens perceive themselves. During adolescence, there is a possibility of heightened self-awareness and concerns of how an adolescent girl's peers portray her (Davison & McCabe, 2006). Also, Feingold and Mazzella (cited in Davidson & McCabe, 2006) stated that "concerns about the body have been documented as widespread among female populations, with adolescence considered an especially vulnerable period for disturbances in female body image" (p. 17).

Physical changes also can be difficult because "adolescents receive the most criticism regarding their physical appearance and the most efforts to change their appearance" (Croll, 2005, p. 157). "Socializiation encourages males to strive to become stronger and more developed, while females are to make their bodies more beautiful" (Croll, 2005, p. 157). Social Psychology has shown the impact of an adolescent girl's appearance on how others perceive and interact with her, with unattractive individuals receiving negative evaluations from their peers and reduced social contact from their peers as well (Davidson & McCabe, 2006).

During adolescences, girls may also experience some sort of emotional disturbance, which can lead them to believe they are unattractive. For instance, "Parents tend to become less positive and more critical regarding their children's appearance, eating and physical activity as they move into and through adolescence" (Croll, 2005, p. 157). Their peers can also make them become emotionally unstable, especially if they are going through puberty and the related physical changes. These changes are an increase of hips and bone structure (Croll, 2005). From

these physical changes due to puberty and adolescence, Dornbusch et al. (cited in Marcotte et al., 2002) "found that a growing percentage of girls desired to become thinner as they progressed toward a pubertal status" (p. 4).

Family Influence

The family plays an important role in the influence of eating behaviors of adolescents, especially girls (Green & Pritchard, 2003). Children learn their morals and values from their parent or guardian, and many times model their behavior based on their parents (Green & Pritchard, 2003). In regard to healthy eating, each family constructs what they feel is necessary and correct in terms of nutrition (Green & Pritchard, 2003). Parents or guardians have an important role in a child's life in regards to how to eat, what to eat, and the portion size, which has the potential to influence a person's life-long eating habit and nutritional understanding (Green & Pritchard, 2003).

Family environment also could influence an adolescent girl's self-esteem due to "weight- or shape-related criticism by family members or others" (Green & Pritchard, 2003, p. 217). The research indicates that family members who criticize their adolescent daughter contribute significantly to body dissatisfaction (Green & Pritchard, 2003). As adolescent girls go through the changes that puberty brings, family members sometimes say negative things that can contribute to their adolescent daughter feeling sad, depressed or convinced they must lose weight to make their family love them. This is partially supported in the research as Paxton et al. (cited in Griffiths & McCabe, 2000) found "that 19 percent of high school girls reported receiving direct encouragement from parents to diet" (p. 302).

Research indicates if a member of a family stresses an individual within the family to conduct a diet, he or she may develop low self-esteem or body image (Green & Pritchard, 2003).

Within the family realm, children may feel the direct pressure to meet the demanding standards in their education, sports, and peer relationships, which may result in poor body image and self-esteem (Green & Pritchard, 2003).

Parents, particularly mothers, who give parental feedback in terms of dieting, may have a tremendous impact on their adolescent daughter's overall development of body satisfaction (Green & Pritchard, 2003). Therefore, if an adolescent girl has a mother who is very critical about weight control, and stresses that looking thin is the only way of looking good, it is known that the adolescent will model her weight control behaviors in order to lose weight. The adolescent girl may start to think the same way as her mother and likewise believe the only way a person is attractive is if they are thin (Field et al., 2001).

Due to parents being more critical of their adolescent daughters, they most likely become encouraged to avoid being fat. This can influence them to become constant dieters and use unhealthy weight-control methods (Croll, 2005). A smart way to turn parents away from being critical would be to have "health professionals work with parents to help them encourage their children to be healthy in a manner that supports healthy body image development" (Croll, 2005, p. 157). Because of the beliefs adolescent girls learn from their mothers, it has been said "that girls whose mothers diet and are concerned with their weight and shape are more likely than their peers to develop unhealthy weight control and practices" (Field et al., 2001, p. 55).

Media

The media has a strong influence on how an adolescent girl's body should look (Field et al., 2001). Media includes radio, television, movies, newspapers, magazines, Web sites and billboards. It is true that "the mass media are believed to encourage girls to form unrealistically thin body ideals, which is unattainable" (Field et al., 2001, p. 54). For example, many of the

models who appear in the media are nowhere close to the ideal body, and most of the models and celebrities in magazines are airbrushed or otherwise enhanced by computer-generated means (Field et al., 2001).

Also, "it has been observed that there is a clear association between exposure to beauty and fashion magazines and higher levels of weight concerns or eating disorder symptoms in adolescent girls" (Field et al., 2001, p. 54). Also, 69% of girls in one study said that magazine models influence their idea of the perfect body shape, and the continual acceptance of this unrealistic body type creates an impractical standard for the majority of women (Field et al., 2001).

The amount of media exposure an adolescent girl receives also can affect the way she perceives her body and can lead her to become dissatisfied and believe she needs to diet. The media portrays an image that if you fit the thin ideal, then you are more outgoing, successful, popular and satisfied, which are not attainable for those who do not fulfill the ideal of being thin (Green & Pritchard, 2003). The media also does not show that airbrushing is almost always used to modify appearances (Women's Health, 2007). So when adolescent girls look at these distorted images, they do not realize that a computer has helped create the thin, beautiful model who does not look that way in reality (Women's Health, 2007).

In addition, adolescent girls may not realize that the celebrity 'ideal' they admire so much gets her beautiful look by spending up to thousands of dollars worth of plastic surgery, Botox, a personal stylist, chef, personal trainer, and a large wardrobe budget (Women's Health, 2007). Models who have figures for the catwalk make up only a very small percentage of the general population (Women's Health, 2007). As a result of adolescent girls being exposed to these thin

model figures, it leaves adolescent girls susceptible to feelings of failure and shame. That in turn can further erode self-esteem and lead girls to believe they have a negative body image.

However, there are signs that some media executives are backing away from the requirement that models be ultra thin. Some in the industry have established a minimum body mass index models must attain before they can do a show or photo shoot. In 2006, underweight models were banned from participating in Fashion Week in Madrid, Spain, because many of their BMIs were below 18. However, there continues to be an incentive for companies to design their advertising campaigns around the human desire for physical perfection, that being the consumers' willingness to buy expensive products in pursuit of that goal.

During puberty and adolescence, it is not realistic for one's body to change the way the media stresses and to acquire the thin ideal body image (Green & Pritchard, 2003). Also, the mass media is significantly and powerfully influential when it comes to shaping American culture. Pressure from the media to have the ideal thin body type can set off negative feelings towards an adolescent girl's appearance, and self-esteem could be affected (Green & Pritchard, 2003).

Diets and other weight loss tools are spread throughout the media for children and adolescents in pursuit of the ideal model figure. Society presently associates attractiveness for women with a thin physique. The thin ideal is communicated through society's stereotype of obesity, meaning that being "fat" is bad and "thin" is good (Griffiths & McCabe, 2000).

Dealing more with magazines and seeing frail thin air-brushed models can make an adolescent girl want to look like that. "Magazines targeted at female adolescents are full of images of young, slim, attractive, blemish-free females with small waists, large chests, and only ever-so-slightly-rounded hips" (Croll, 2005, p. 156). Disproportionate dolls also give off a

negative body image for young teens. "If Barbie were real, her neck would be too long and thin to support the weight of her head, and her upper body proportions would make it difficult for her to walk upright" (Croll, 2005, p. 156).

As a result of adolescent girls being exposed to the mass media, "it increases the likelihood that a girl becomes concerned with her weight or develops eating disorder symptoms because the media encourages them to compare their bodies with those depicted in the media" (Field et al., 2001, p. 54).

Peer Influence

During the developmental stage of adolescence, peer relationships play a significant role (Davidson & McCabe, 2006). Adolescents' feelings of self-esteem may be positively or negatively affected through the influence of their peers. According to Simmons, Rosenberg and Rosenberg (cited in Davison & McCabe, 2006), during the early stages of adolescence, adolescents may have a heightened self-awareness and apprehension of how their peers evaluate them.

As adolescent girls go through adolescence, the relationships they have with peers play an important role of comparing bodies and developing a negative view of their body. From that, they develop a low self-esteem and possibly an eating disorder. "To gain acceptance by their peers, adolescents may resort to adopting the perceived beliefs and behaviors practiced by members of their peer group" (Field et al., 2001, p. 55). Peer pressure is difficult during adolescence, and due to the pressures of others, it has been found to be a risk factor for developing bulimic behaviors and disordered eating (Field et al., 2001).

During the teen years, adolescents strive to belong, to have a connection with someone, and to be with others who may have the same general interests. Peer relationships may be one of

the more important aspects during childhood and adolescence in terms of building positive self-esteem and body image. According to Davison and McCabe (2006), social concerns relating to the body can be prevalent during adolescence. Furthermore, there is argument that during the adolescent stage, individuals can be preoccupied with their own appearance and assume that others are very aware of it as well, which can make them feed into it, or make them uncomfortable (Davidson & McCabe, 2006).

The relationships adolescent girls have with peers and family can help shape how they perceive themselves. Adolescent girls develop feelings of low self-esteem because one does not look like her peers (Davidson & McCabe, 2006). Also, if an adolescent girl develops at an earlier or faster rate than other girls, she could develop low self-esteem due to the overwhelming changes her body is going through while her friends are not. (Davidson & McCabe, 2006).

Simmons et al. (cited in Davidson & McCabe, 2006) stated that "developmental psychology has indicated the possibility that early adolescent girls are characterized by heightened self-consciousness and concerns about how peers evaluate them" (p. 16). It has been said that "adolescents' sense of self-worth and perceptions of social relations may therefore be closely linked to their body image" (Davidson & McCabe, 2006, p. 16). A poor body image can hamper adolescents' development of social skills and positive relationships with other boys and girls (Davidson & McCabe, 2006). According to Levine (cited in Field et al., 2001), adolescent girls accept the behaviors and beliefs that are constructed within their peer group. Therefore, girls who observed body weight management practices from their peers, often engaged in the same behaviors to lose weight (Field et al., 2001).

Bruch (cited in Griffiths & McCabe, 2000) said that "clinical studies have found that people with eating disorders have an irrational need to feel connected to others, such that they

rarely feel complete when they are alone" (p. 302). Because of this, females with eating disorders tend to display patterns of interaction with their girlfriends, meaning they will model each other's behavior to lose weight. Due to adolescent girls' family members pressuring them to stay thin, "their fear results in overcompliance to their friends' needs and reflects the great importance they place on their friends' opinions, as they did with their families" (Griffiths & McCabe, 2000, p. 302).

As hard as many parents try to teach their children to "be your own person," the influences outlined above can be overwhelming for adolescents, but more often girls. Everywhere they turn the message is reinforced that being thin and attractive is a prerequisite for popularity, peer acceptance and overall happiness. Conversely, the inability to achieve that ideal body image relegates one to a lonely, unhappy existence. To avoid that possibility, some people go to extremes, which can result in harmful and sometimes fatal results.

Chapter III: Discussion, Conclusions, & Recommendations

In this chapter the research findings that were found in relation to adolescent girls and the relationship with body image and self-esteem are outlined. A summary will be followed by recommendations for further research on adolescent girls and the relationship between body image and self-esteem.

Summary

For adolescent girls, body image and self-esteem are sensitive topics that can be very difficult to discuss. Throughout the years, Furnham, Badmin, and Sneade (2002), Frost and McKelvie (2005), Davidson and McCabe (2006), and Griffiths and McCabe (2000) have conducted case studies to determine what causes adolescents to believe that having a thin body image is very important, and how they think that society portrays very thin women as beautiful and desirable, and average women as overweight and obese. The studies that were looked at came up with essentially the same results. The most popular outcomes of each study told authors that adolescent girls have a negative self-esteem due to the media, family influence, peer influence, and the changes girls experience during adolescence.

Furnham et al. (2002) also explained that an adolescent girl's self-esteem is linked to a lean body image. They surveyed "235 adolescents on the subject of eating attitudes, self-esteem, reasons for exercise, and their ideal versus current body size and shape" (p.581). They found very few girls desired to be heavier, and a much greater percentage of adolescent girls than adolescent boys associated body dissatisfaction with the concept of self-esteem.

Also, specific reasons for exercise were found in relationship with low self-esteem and disordered eating (Furnham et al., 2002). Griffiths & McCabe (2000) evaluated the variables associated with disordered eating and body dissatisfaction among early adolescent girls. The variables were: "perceived views of society, parents and peers regarding weight, self-esteem,

locus of control, onset of menarche, body mass index, and the importance placed on appearance"
(Griffiths & McCabe, 2000, p. 301).

Davidson and McCabe (2006) surveyed 173 girls in grades 8 and 9. "The respondents
completed measures of physical attractiveness, body satisfaction, body image importance, body
image behaviors, appearance comparison, self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and same-sex and
opposite-sex relations" (p. 15). They found that girls tended to report a negative body image
more frequently than did the boys they surveyed (Davidson & McCabe, 2006).

Conclusions

Studies that are conducted "to determine the impact of society, parents and peers would
improve the prediction of disordered eating and body satisfaction of early adolescent girls…"
(Griffiths & McCabe, 2000, p. 309). It was also said that "self-esteem was the most important
predictor of body dissatisfaction, with females with low self-esteem experiencing more body
dissatisfaction than those with high self-esteem" (Griffiths & McCabe, 2000, p. 312). It was also
noted that the impact of society, parents, girlfriends, and boyfriends, improved the prediction of
body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and importance of appearance (Griffiths & McCabe,
2000). Also, Davidson and McCabe (2006) concluded that their study showed evidence for the
association between psychosocial difficulties and poor body image.

Furnham et al. (2002) concluded that "women have traditionally displayed a greater
commitment to the pursuit of cultural standards of beauty than have men" (p.593). From the mid-
1990s to the present day, it is more apparent that slender women are looked at as "beautiful" or
"flawless," those for whom body satisfaction is a central aspect for self-esteem are more likely to
become obsessive with weight and develop negative eating attitudes (Furnham et al., 2002).

Frost and McKelvie (2005) found from their study that there was a positive relationship between exercise activity and the dependent variables considered together, but that it was only significant for self-esteem and body build, not for body image or weight satisfaction. Also, the study suggested "that a higher level of exercise activity is associated with a higher level of self-esteem, and this relationship occurs for female elementary school, high school, and university students" (Frost & McKelvie, 2005, p. 44).

Based on the research case study outcomes, the researcher suggests that further research should be conducted to examine the relationship between body image and self-esteem of adolescent girls. If the researcher wanted to expand the study and get more participants, studies involving preadolescent ages, and all levels of schooling (elementary, middle, and high school) could be conducted, compared, contrasted, and assessed to establish a more comprehensive picture of the relationship between body image and self-esteem. Parents, school counselors and teachers who work with adolescents at some level on a daily basis could discuss and develop guidance activities and lessons regarding body image and self-esteem to promote ways for female adolescents to be comfortable in their own skin.

The researcher recommends for school counselors at all levels to create a curriculum for the classroom or for small group counseling that will educate students about the importance of a healthy body image and positive self-esteem. These lesson topics should discuss friendships, relationships and team-building activities. Also, handing out informational worksheets and having them watch videos on what is a healthy body versus an unhealthy body could help students having issues with body image and self-esteem.

Another recommendation includes bringing community members into the schools through the use of guest speakers on the importance of living a life with a healthy body image and positive self-esteem, including speakers who had suffered with body image and self-esteem issues and how they overcame them. Having students hear guest speakers on positive or negative experiences will also help them gain insight on keeping a healthy body image and positive self-esteem.

Furthermore, collaboration with health and physical education teachers in schools to develop clubs for extracurricular activities if schools do not already provide these types of activities for students. The activities should include instruction on healthy eating, different types of exercise (swimming, running, team and individual sports, etc.), and being educated on a healthy lifestyle that will help young people maintain fitness in line with what is a proper weight for them. This might reduce the frequency of dangerous behaviors some young people engage in seeking an unrealistic and unhealthy "ideal."

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