

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND ANXIETY ABOUT THE BODY

The Psychology of Exercise and Physical Activity

Week 5

BODY IMAGE DEFINED

- How we see our own body
- How we think, feel, and act toward it
- Four Dimensions of Body Image
- Perceptual:
 - How we imagine ourselves to look
- Cognitive:
 - How we think about or evaluate our body in terms of its appearance and function
- Affective (Emotional):
 - Feelings (i.e., comfortable, proud, anxious, disgusted) experienced in relation to our body's appearance and function
- Behavioural:
 - What we do to reflect our positive or negative perceptions, thoughts, and feelings

HEALTHY BODY IMAGE

- Accurate perceptions about body shape and size
 - Thoughts and feelings about one's body that are predominantly positive
 - Behaviour that reflects positive evaluations

Body Image Disturbance:

- Inaccurate perceptions of one's body shape and size; image differs from one's actual shape/size
- Negative thoughts and feelings about one's body
- Actions performed to hide or change the body without regard to health implications

BODY REALITY AND BODY IDEAL

- Body reality:
 - Our actual physical characteristics—height, weight, body fat, lean body mass, bone structure, fitness, strength, disease , etc.
- Body ideal:
 - How we think our body should look and function

Body image reflects an interplay between body reality and body ideal

FACTORS IN BODY IMAGE FORMATION AND DISTURBANCE

- Activity participation
- Changes to body reality

Media influence

- Displaces personal body ideals with media-driven body ideals
- Promotes strict and narrowly defined image of an ideal body
- Promotes unrealistic ideals that are unattainable for the vast majority of the population
- Perpetuates the misconception that bodies of fashion models and movie stars are the norm

ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

- Activities that we choose to participate in can influence body image by altering perceptions of the body ideal
- If the new ideal is more realistic than the media ideal, body image can improve
- If the new ideal is less realistic and less attainable, the gap between body ideal and reality will widen and body image disturbance will increase

Changes to Body Reality

- Throughout life, one's body grows and alters in size, shape, proportion, and function
- Changes occur that have a profound effect on feelings about oneself and one's body
 - Examples: puberty, having children, advancing age

WHY IS BODY IMAGE IMPORTANT?

- Healthy body image is related to better psychological well-being in two ways:
 - Better self-esteem
 - Lowered risk for depression and anxiety
- Depression and Anxiety
 - Poor body image is associated with greater anxiety and depression symptoms
 - Depressed and anxious persons view their appearance more negatively than do non-depressed individuals, even if there are no differences in actual body shape and size
 - Body image disturbance is an antecedent, not a consequence, of increased depression and anxiety

BODY DYSMORPHIC DISORDER

- An extreme case of body dissatisfaction
- Excessive preoccupation with some aspect of one's physical appearance
- Obsessive-compulsive activities such as constantly weighing oneself

Muscle dysmorphia:

- Preoccupation with muscularity
- Anxiety and dissatisfaction with muscles
- Steroid use and excessive work out routines

Muscle dysmorphic(MD)-fear of being muscularly small

Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD)-preoccupied with physical appearance that become obsessive and cause them to avoid social situations

RELATIONSHIP OF BODY IMAGE TO PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Body image can lead to both health-damaging and health-promoting behaviours:

Health-damaging

- Eating disorders
- Unhealthy weight control strategies
- Smoking

Health-promoting

- Diet and exercise programs
- Healthy eating
- Physical activity

EXERCISE DEPENDENCE

- Thoughts on reading provided?

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND ANXIETY ABOUT THE BODY

- Self Presentation:
 - The attempt by an individual to present one-self and to omit self-relevant information to maximize the likelihood **that positive social impression** will be generated and undesired impression will be avoided.
 - Physical Activity and Anxiety About the Body
- Social Physique Anxiety (SPA)
- Women who possess high SPA view their physical appearance more negatively
 - Women with high SPA individuals often exercise for self-presentation reasons (e.g. Weight loss, to improve appearance, and body tone)
 - Women low in SPA were more likely to exercise for the purpose of fitness, mood enhancement, & health.

NEGATIVE EFFECT (MOOD) AND EXERCISE

- We know that exercise offers a number of psychological, social and physical benefits...
- There is evidence that exercise can cause negative effect.
- Why are more people not active? Why have we come to the simplistic conclusion that exercise makes us feel better?
- According to Backhouse et al. (2007), several reasons exist:
 - Tendency to ignore findings that conflict with positive conclusions
 - Participants are generally healthy college students
 - Measured affect before and after – rather than during.
 - Grouped responses – average of responses. $\frac{1}{2}$ positive / $\frac{1}{2}$ negative effect cancel each other out. What about individual responses.

SUGGESTED THAT A GENERAL RESPONSE TO EXERCISE DOES NOT EXIST!

- Instead it is an interaction between:
- Exercise factors – Intensity / Mode
- Person factors – Fitness / Training Status / Self-efficacy / Personality
- Environmental factors – Leadership Style / Mirrored Environments

TASK: IDENTIFY FROM THE RESEARCH HOW THE FOLLOWING MAY INFLUENCE HOW AN EXERCISER FEELS ABOUT THEMSELVES IN AN EXERCISE ENVIRONMENT...

- Leader behaviour – self presentational behaviour
- Mirrors / lack of
- Group participants / gym – ability / male / female
- Motivational climate – task / ego
- Changes to body reality
- Media driven ideals

▪ **Positives and negatives...**

MECHANISMS OF CHANGE IN BODY IMAGE

- Mechanisms for this:
 - Improved Fitness
 - Improved awareness of physical capabilities
 - Increased self efficacy

INFLUENCE OF BODY IMAGE ON EXERCISE BEHAVIOUR

Exercise motivation:

- Body image concerns are a powerful motivator
- Desire to lose weight or increase muscle tone often shifts to desire for continued physical and psychological well-being
- Body image can also be a de-motivator: some people avoid exercise completely
- Exercise setting and attire preference
- People with high social physique anxiety may exercise in private or far away from instructor, in baggy non revealing clothes

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA / THE MEDIA?

- Articles on Moodle...

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPA

- Regular physical activity has been shown to reduce SPA
- Women with high SPA stand at the back and wear baggy clothing in aerobic classes (Brewer, et al, 2004)
- Being in groups with people one perceives as similar physically also reduces SPA.
- Females experience less SPA in group aerobic and weight training classes.
- Instructors who lead classes primarily for self-presentation reasons (e.g. an instructor who wants to show you that they are better than you) can cause high SPA
- Instructor who lead classes primarily for leadership (e.g. sensitive to client's level) opportunities possess lower SPA

BODY IMAGE & EXERCISE

Findings:

- Exercise training can lead to significant improvements in body image of women (Martin & Lichtenberger, 2002)
- Both aerobic and weight training improved body image with weight training having the greatest impact.
- Exercisers are less dissatisfied with their weight
- High active women evaluated their physical appearance better than inactive women
- Women (active and inactive) are overly preoccupied with weight loss

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THE IMPACT OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE EXERCISE ENVIRONMENT

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THE ROLE OF THE EXERCISE ENVIRONMENT...

Definitions for task 1

- **Self Presentation:** The selective presentation and omission of aspects of the self to create a desired impression and avoid undesired impressions with specific people in a social encounter, such as exercising in a gym environment (Hart et al. 1989; Leary, 1992).
- **Social Anxiety:** The negative consequences that may be experienced when an individual doubts their ability to make a desired impression on others.
- **Social Physique Anxiety:** Perceive that their physique will be negatively evaluated by others.

TASK: *USING RELEVANT RESEARCH*, IDENTIFY THE ROLE OF EXERCISE LEADERS IN RELATION TO ENJOYMENT AND ADHERENCE TO EXERCISE?...(SELECT ONE EACH...WORK AS A SMALL GROUP)

1. What is required for successful leadership in an exercise setting?
What leader characteristics are deemed important?
2. What is the impact of leadership style?
In particular – a health focused / appearance focused / socially enriched style...
3. How can a leader / leader behaviour impact upon social physique anxiety?
4. How can the type of clothing worn by the exerciser or instructor impact upon self presentation concerns?
5. What does the research suggest about mirrors in an exercise environment?

EXERCISE FACTORS – INTENSITY / MODE

- INTENSITY
- Rose and Parfitt (2007) / kilpatrick et al. (2007) found positive affect significantly lower at high compared to low intensities.
- Less positive affect during hard short bout of exercise as opposed to longer moderate intensity bout.
- Decrease not maintained afterwards...Why?
- Inter-individual variability of responses.

Unique affective experience – lost in group data?

MODE

- Choose a preferred activity.
- Parfitt and Gledhill (2004) – greater psychological distress when low active adults performed their non preferred mode of exercise.
- Daley and Maynard (2003) – active males – greater negative affect during and after exercise which they had not chosen to do compared with when had choice.
- Also greater increase in negative affect following non preferred exercise compared to watching TV.
- Physical benefits – non preferred exercise
- For increased feeling state – better off watching TV.

PERSON FACTORS – FITNESS / TRAINING STATUS / SELF-EFFICACY

- FITNESS / TRAINING STATUS
- Backhouse et al. (2007) – less fit / untrained report more negative affect to exercise than trained.
- Intensity – light / mod / hard – trained much more positive affect in relation to pre- exercise level than untrained.
- Blanchard (2001) – similar results for a cycle ergometer session with unfit and highly fit females.
- Moderate intensity exercise fine – high intensity exercise caused negative affect for unfit females.
- Practical implications?

THE INDIVIDUAL'S MOTIVES TO EXERCISE

- Exercising to control weight or improve body tone was associated with lower levels of body satisfaction (Tiggeman and Williamson, 2000).
- WC motives stronger in women than men.
- Strelan and Hargreaves (2005) examined the role of self-objectification (focus on external appearance and evaluation by others).
- Sample of women aged 16-25 years – those scoring high on self objectification more dissatisfied with their bodies if reported weight / appearance related motives for exercising.
- Impact of exercising for purely body-related reasons...
- Heightens the negative influence that self-objectification has on body esteem.

SELF EFFICACY

- Manipulated low self efficacy (told performance poor) = higher levels of distress and fatigue following information and additional stepping task (Mc Auley et al. 1999).
- Robbins et al. (2004) – adolescents with low self efficacy (not manipulated) associated with feeling worse during exercise.
- Effects of maturation – early stages of puberty felt worse than those at the later stages.
- Practical implications of self efficacy?

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS – LEADERSHIP STYLE / MIRRORED ENVIRONMENTS

- Increased levels of perceived physical exhaustion when cycling with others in front of a mirror / rather than alone.
- Social comparisons – perception of evaluation
- Practical implications – increase SE (how?) / choice of environment – avoid mirrored.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. People who enjoy their workouts show the biggest exercise related improvements in body image.
2. Fitness instructors need to teach people about body image and exercise behaviour.
3. Monitor progress of bodily changes in strength and body composition throughout your program.
4. Fitness instructors should encourage clients to wear loose-fitted, comfortable exercise attire.
5. Media promotion materials of classes or exercise campaigns should show a wide range of body shapes, sizes, and physical abilities.
6. Exercise programs should focus on improving physical function, strength, and endurance rather than on changing physical appearance