

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF THEIR PHYSICAL
BODIES

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE

OCTOBER 23RD, 2009

SCHOOL OF SPORT & EXERCISE SCIENCE
FACULTY OF ARTS, EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
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ABSTRACT

Research has consistently revealed gender differences in physical self-concept and engagement in physical activity, with results typically favouring boys. Despite strong evidence to suggest that socialisation results in physical activity taking on different meanings and experiences for girls and boys, these different meanings have rarely been considered in interventions targeting youth physical inactivity. Studies of self-objectification have shown that - women, particularly adolescent girls, experience the negative impact of self-objectification (e.g., disordered eating, depression and decreased body satisfaction) more than males, although males are increasingly being subject to sexual objectification in society. Developmental differences in measures of physical self-concept have been less clear than gendered differences but have major implications for when interventions targeting physical inactivity and body image should be initiated.

The two studies reported in this thesis used complementary quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explore gender and developmental differences in young peoples' perceptions and experiences of their bodies. In Study 1, the Self-Objectification Questionnaire (SOQ), the Physical Self-Perception Profile for Children and Youth (PSPP-CY) and the Socio-cultural Attitudes to Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ) were administered to 139 young people across three key developmental age groups (between the ages of eight and 18 years of age) with the aim of examining physical self-concept and knowledge of and ascription to dominant beliefs about attractiveness in young people. Measures of physical activity and other demographic variables were collected in order to examine important relationships between personal variables and scores on the questionnaires. Study 2 utilized a unique qualitative methodology employing drawings and individual interviews with 12 young people aged eight to 17 years of age, to explore in rich detail the real-life experiences of young people with regard to their bodies. Interview data was transcribed and coded using constructivist grounded theory.

Study 1 revealed expected gender differences favouring boys in levels of adequate physical activity and physical self-concept. Girls were found to experience higher rates of self-objectification than boys. Few developmental differences were found on any of the measures suggesting that young peoples' perceptions about their bodies may be formed in childhood. Study 1 highlighted the centrality of physical attractiveness to young peoples' physical self-concept, both for boys and girls, a finding that was repeated in study 2. Study 2 also revealed complex and intertwined embodied experiences for both boys and girls, many of which resulted in demands for the constant surveillance of the self and others, particularly in the presence of peers inside and outside the school setting. Actual or perceived teasing by peers was revealed as potentially one of the most powerful contextual influences for both girls and boys and, for some participants, appeared to exert an influence even when those peers were not physically present. The results also suggested the re-coding of some observable characteristics such as 'fitness' and 'health' into non-observable or appearance-based traits, by both boys and girls. The preferred gendered identity of boys in this study and their participation in physical 'play' across all age groupings was found to support their participation in physical activity. The gendered identities of most girls in study 2 did not support ongoing participation in physical activity as a central element. Furthermore, physically active 'play' in the context of friendship disappeared with increasing age for girls. Performative gender provided a useful framework for understanding complexity and apparent contradictions in young peoples' beliefs and behaviours regarding their bodies.

These studies highlight the need for longitudinal studies to better explore how physical self-concept alters and is influenced over the lifespan. The results further suggest that interventions seeking to increase participation in physical activity or promoting alternative views of the physical self should start in childhood and take into account the important role of gender and gendered identity if they are to be successful.

Doctor of Philosophy Declaration

“I, Vanessa Camille Spiller, declare that the PhD thesis entitled “Young people’s perceptions and experiences of their physical bodies” is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes.

This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work”.

Signature

Date

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Gail and Dylan for putting up with being a thesis widow/orphan for 6 ½ years. This thesis was written on holidays and weekends away and at gymnastic lessons, swimming pools and skateboard parks. I look forward to ‘doing’ more and ‘watching’ less.

Thanks to my thesis supervisors, Caroline Symons and Harriet Speed for their ongoing support, expertise and endless proof-reading.

Thanks to my mum and Elizabeth Little for their help with ‘apostrophes’ and spellinng.

Thanks to and in memory of Precilla Choi whose enthusiasm, tenaciousness and faith got me started on this jourey in the first place.

PREFACE

As a thesis with phenomenological leanings, it seems appropriate to talk about the reason that I selected this topic. I do this also as a form of reflexivity, in situating myself in the research as a parent, an aunt and as a woman with a long history of participation in physical activities of all sorts. When my niece was eight she came up to me and proudly showed me her open palms. There was a line of calluses and blisters just below each of the fingers. Not sure if I was supposed to be proud or concerned, I offered her a neutral “Oh”. “Monkey bars”, she proudly exclaimed as if this explained everything. I recognised how pleased she was with her calloused hands and interpreted this as reflecting her growing physical abilities and competency on this piece of playground equipment. At the same time, I also wondered whether this pride in her abilities would continue with her into adolescence or, as for many other girls, physical competency at athletic tasks would begin to become less important than other aspects of her world. In many ways this thesis and the studies conducted provide a qualitative and quantitative exploration of these and related issues.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Physical bodies are integral to our experiences of the world and take centre stage in the context of physical activity. Bodies, overtly and inadvertently convey important messages about their owners and the societies in which they exist (Connell, 1995, 2000; Douglas, 1970, 1980; Grosz, 1994). Bodies are simultaneously sites of social control and conformity, but are also locations of resistance and challenge, constantly changing, informed internally through the possibilities of biology and cognition and externally through contact with the world (Connell, 1995, 2000; Grosz, 1994). 'Lived' bodies are complex and while Western philosophies have attempted to force them into discrete dichotomous categories such as male and female, and science has removed them from their socio-cultural context to present them as objective facts, such presentations rarely fit with the lived experiences of individuals. Social-constructivist and feminist theories have allowed bodies to be viewed in alternative and more complex ways: as simultaneously submissive and resistant, ambiguous and contradictory, reflecting changing degrees of choice and conscious action, and always existing within a socio-cultural context (Connell, 1995, 2000; Usser, 1997). It is these frameworks that will enable this thesis to examine young peoples' experiences of their physical bodies in the context of physical activity to be examined.

Young people's perceptions and experiences of their bodies are relevant to two concerning contemporary issues: inadequate levels of physical activity levels and body image disturbance. This thesis will consider both issues by examining the different ways in which young people of both genders view their own bodies and the bodies of others and how physical activity impacts on their experiences and perceptions. The notion that many young people do not exercise enough to gain important health benefits is well documented (e.g., Australian Bureau of Statistics,

2003a, 2003b, 2008; Roberts, Tynjala & Lomkov, 2004; Stephenson, Bauman, Armstrong, Smith et al., 2000). Insufficient physical activity is more frequently an issue for girls than boys, and gender-related differences in participation rates have their origins in early adolescence (11 – 12 years), but often continue into adulthood (Armstrong, Balding, Gentle & Kirby, 1990; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003a, 2003b; Biddle & Armstrong, 1992; Fox, 1994; Hagger, Ashford & Stambulova, 1998; Kowalski, Crocker & Faulkner, 1997; McManus & Armstrong, 1996; Ross & Pate, 1987; Sallis, 1993; Vertinsky, 1997).

Among other factors, the socialization of girls is thought to contribute significantly to the decline in physical activity, particularly in the case of organised sport (Choi, 2000). Participation in physical activity may be either irrelevant or run contrary to the development of a 'feminine' identity, leading many girls and women to conclude that "sport and exercise is not for them", thus impacting negatively on their exercise choices and participation levels (Choi, 2000, *p.5*; Cockburn & Clarke, 2002).

Learning 'femininity' is associated with girls being taught from a young age the importance of physical appearance, often sexualized, to their self-worth (Choi, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994; Young, 1990). For many girls, physical appearance dominates their feelings about themselves above any other defining attributes such as intellectual ability or personal qualities. Adopting and internalizing this view of the self has been associated with body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and eating disorders in females (APA, 2007; Rosen, 1992; Thompson, 1996).

The interface between gendered identity, femininity, physical self-concept and physical activity is complex. For example, when girls' participation in physical activity is intended to enhance physical appearance through weight loss or toning, this focus often reduces opportunities for girls to view and experience their bodies in other ways, such as enjoying increased functionality through increased fitness (Choi, 2000; Mutrie & Choi, 2000).

Some women however, do resist conventional ideals of femininity with regards to physical activity. Qualitative studies have provided insights into the lived experiences of adult women who decide that sport *is* for them. Several studies have considered the experiences of women playing elite level, traditionally male sports, such as rugby, cricket, soccer and ice hockey (Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar, Kauer, 2004; Russell, 2002; Theberge, 2003). These women are interesting to study as they have high levels of commitment to their chosen sports, perform at an elite level and as a result have developed strong, fit and skilful bodies. Many of these women report positive experiences of their bodies within the sporting context; however, experiences in the social context are more diverse, and often at odds with societal ideals of femininity (Greenleaf, 2002; Krane et al., 2004; Russell, 2002). Interviews with female athletes about participation in organised sport at this level highlight the complex body-related negotiations that occur in order for women to balance their desire for concurrent feminine and sporting identities (Krane et al., 2004; Russell, 2002).

Even women participating in highly consumerised and appearance focused physical activities such as aerobics, may also find opportunities for empowerment through establishing meaningful social networks and engaging in discussions about socio-political issues (Brabazon, 2002). These earlier qualitative studies invite questions about the types of negotiations experienced by young women participating in physical activity at non-elite levels.

For boys, physical activity, particularly organised sport, plays a central role in teaching and reinforcing masculine identity (Dunning, 1994; Whitson, 1990). Sport teaches boys to use their bodies in skilful, space occupying, forceful and dominating ways (Connell, 1983; Whitson, 1990). Through participation in sports many boys learn that the functionality and performance of their bodies is more important than its appearance. This is almost the polar opposite of the learning experiences of girls (Franzoi, 1995). The hegemonic masculine ideal is often synonymous with the male athletic body – muscular, fit and strong (Bryson, 1983; Cahn, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994; Mishkind, Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1986). Therefore, participation in physical activity typically provides a better 'fit' for the development of masculine gendered identity (Choi, 2000).

Qualitative studies have also explored the experiences of men and boys in regards to their bodies, particularly in the context of physical activity and sport (Davison, 2000; Drummond, 2003; Embrey & Drummond, 1997; Swain, 2003). These studies have found different levels of body satisfaction and shifting views of their bodies depending on how closely boys conform to hegemonic male ideals that demand high levels of athletic competence. For many boys and men, masculine identity is intimately tied to sporting participation. More subtle contextual changes have rarely been explored in detail as studies have typically focused on the

experiences of boys who either globally conform to ideals or did not. Studies have rarely explored changes at the individual level where boys may experience conformity in one context but not in another, as been done with the elite level athletic women. Studies of contextual changes within individuals will provide another level of understanding to the experiences of boys with their bodies.

Although body dissatisfaction is well documented in women and girls, there is growing evidence that dissatisfaction with physical appearance is increasingly becoming a concern for young males as well (Drummond, 1999; 2001; Levine & Smolak, 2002; Morgan, 2002; Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2000a; Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2004; Tiggemann, Martins, & Churchett, 2008). This dissatisfaction primarily manifests in the desire for increased musculature and increases or decreases in weight, particularly decreases in body fat (Cohane & Pope, 2001; Cohn & Adler, 1992; Levinson, Powell, & Steelman, 1986; Lowes & Tiggeman, 2003; Page & Allen, 1995; Pope, Gruber, Mangweth, Bureau, deCol, Jouvent, & Hudson, 2000; Timko & Rodin, 1988). Body dissatisfaction in boys and men has been associated with negative health outcomes such as exercise addiction, disordered eating patterns, body dysmorphic disorder, misuse of anabolic steroids and inappropriate use of food supplements (Choi, Pope & Olivardia, 2002; Cohane & Pope, 2001; Dittmar, Lloyd, Dugan, Halliwell, Jacobs & Cramer, 2000; Lynch & Zellner, 1999; McCreary & Sasse, 2000; Olivardia, Pope, Borowiecki, & Cohane, 2004; Olivardia, Pope & Hudson, 2000; Peixote Labre, 2002; Pope, Gruber, Choi, Olivardia, & Phillips, 1997; Pope, Thompson, Covert, & Stormer, 1999).

In both genders, the increasing incidence of obesity, inadequate physical activity levels and body dissatisfaction call for greater individual and societal understanding of physical self-concept in young people. However, this thesis is also concerned with

the physical body as a socially constructed vehicle with agency. Gender theory, in particular the social construction of gender as well as theories of performative gender and self-objectification, have been adopted within a larger theoretical framework of cultural studies and feminist research to examine this topic in pre-adolescent and adolescent young people.

The studies employed in this thesis use complementary qualitative and quantitative methodologies to explore children and young people's perceptions and experiences of their physical bodies, particularly, but not exclusively, in the context of physical activity. This thesis will provide a quantitative understanding of physical self-concept including issues of self-objectification and internalization and awareness of socio-cultural attitudes to dominant societal ideals of appearance in young people of both genders. This thesis will also move beyond static one dimensional measures of these constructs and examine the real life experiences of resistance and compliance, contradiction and negotiation in young people. Both studies target the experiences of 'everyday' young people, not just those engaged in elite level athleticism.

Defining Childhood, Early and Late Adolescence

Before proceeding with the literature review it is important to define a number of terms used throughout this thesis. The developmental windows included in this study were late childhood (8 – 10 years), early adolescence (11 – 14 years) and later adolescence (15 – 18 years). While there is no universal consensus about what ages constitute these stages of development, there is agreement that a range of developmental tasks and milestones must be achieved during this time period (Brown, 1990; Eccles, 1999; Radzik, Sherer & Neinstein, 2002). It is also generally agreed that

development through these periods is on a continuum that varies with individuals and that the bio-psychosocial processes associated with these are never restricted to chronologically defined boundaries.

The selection of age ranges for inclusion in this study took into consideration the physical, cognitive and other developmental changes that occur within these age periods. Late childhood (8 – 10 years) is an important age range for inclusion as it is the period immediately preceding physical maturation for most children and also a time of important cognitive and social development. Cognitively, children in this age group are focused on developing competency in particular learning and skill areas such as reading, mathematics etc. They also develop skills in reflection and evaluation and are better able to modify their behaviours in ways that can assist them in obtaining skill acquisition (Eccles, 1993, *p.33*). Many remain optimistic about skill acquisition despite experiences of failure. Socially, children in this age range are increasingly aware of the viewpoints of others and the social significance of this (Brown, 1990; Eccles, 1999, *p.34*). The approval of peers is important and achieving competence in particular physical and academic skill areas is associated with increased social status (Eccles, 1999). The identification of activities or tasks as important, for example, in establishing their gender or peer identity, has an important influence on whether or not a young person will attempt to master a particular activity. The perceived value of activities and a child's perceived competence may result in some activities being pursued while others are avoided.

This age range is also important in children's development of ideas and beliefs about their bodies and the bodies of others. Girls as young as eight have been found to express a desire for adult ideals of physical appearance; that is thinness with limited muscularity (Gilbert, 1998; Grogan & Wainright, 1996; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003;

Pine, 2001). While research on boys has been scarcer, there is evidence that concerns about the physical presentation and shape of the body and its ideal form has its origin in pre-adolescence for young people of both sexes (Attie & Brooks-Gunn, 1987; Maloney, McGuire, Daniels, & Specker, 1989; Grogan, Donaldson, Richards, & Wainright, 1997; Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe & Tantleff-Dunn, 1998).

Therefore, late childhood is of interest to this thesis because it is a period of important processes and experiences. It contains peaks in physical activity participation and is a time of improving physical abilities and increasing cognitive functioning, including the ability to self reflect. It is also a time of increased awareness of others, including the social status to be gained by excelling in particular areas. Late childhood involves ongoing early identity development, and importantly, it is a time when young people will continue to persevere even in the face of failure.

Early adolescence (11 – 14 years) marks the onset of physical maturation for many young people. Body image concerns feature strongly in this age group as young people focus on the changes in their own physical appearance and compare themselves with others in terms of attractiveness and appearance (Radzik, Sherer, Neinstein et al., 2002). They often have an increased interest in sexual development. Individuals in this developmental period typically seek a deeper understanding of themselves and others and begin to develop a personal identity and value system independent of their parents (Eccles, 1998; Radzik, Sherer, Neinstein et al., 2002). In addition, early adolescents are more able to think in complex and abstract ways, consider multiple aspects of problems, acquire and learn more complex information and generalise experiences. During this stage young people often obtain increased

freedom from adults, interact more frequently with peers (initially of the same sex), develop increased personal autonomy and value social acceptance more highly (Eccles, 1999; Radzik, Sherer & Neinstein et al., 2002).

Consideration of this age group is important because of the impacts of physical maturation. In boys, increasing height and muscularity is thought to contribute more positively to self-esteem/self-concept development as it moves them closer to societal images of the ideal male (Hargreaves, 1994; Offner, Schonert-Reichl & Boxer, 1996). Conversely, physical maturation pulls girls further from feminine ideals as body fat increases and weight and physical dimensions such as hip and thigh size increase, resulting in a less positive experience for many girls (Schur, Sanders & Steiner, 2000; Smolak & Levine, 1996). Physical appearance and social acceptance has been found to override competence in other areas as a predictor of self-esteem during this developmental period (Harter, 1998). It is also during this time that large drops in participation in physical activity occur for young people of both genders, but it is especially marked for girls.

While physical changes may no longer be a central focus for the later adolescent (15 to 18 years), the development of body image and the importance of peer groups continue and often intensify. The focus in this period is on improving the physical attractiveness of the body. Adolescents continue to separate from their families by immersing themselves in peer activities and interactions. There is increased interest and participation in relationships of a more sexual nature. Cognitive abilities continue to develop and young people seek a greater sense of individuality and personal identity. Older adolescents are better able to recognise their cognitive abilities and

limitations (Radzik, Sherer & Neinstein et al., 2002). Young people in this age group start to make important life decisions, for example, about their careers and further education. It marks a transitional time from school to post-school options.

This study will use the term 'young people' to represent both children and adolescents under the age of 18 years. More specific terms such as 'adolescence' or 'late childhood' will be used where such distinctions are significant.

Defining Physical Activity

Much of the literature assumes a common understanding of the terms physical activity and organised sport and uses the terms interchangeably with little acknowledgement of differences between them. Both studies in this thesis focus on examining participants' experiences with physical activity, whether or not they might be also considered an organised sport. Physical activity refers to any activity that fits the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition, the essence of which is in the physiological outcomes such as puffing, shortness of breath, increased heart rate etc. (Roberts et al., 2004). The World Health Organization's report on young people's health behaviour (Roberts et al., 2004) defines physical activity as:

any activity that increases your heart rate and makes you get out of breath some of the time. Physical activity can be done in sports, school activities, playing with friends, or walking to school. Some examples of physical activity are running, brisk walking, rollerblading, biking, dancing, skateboarding, swimming, soccer, basketball, football and surfing (p.91).

This is an appropriate definition for the age groups under examination which includes both organised and non-organised sports including physical games that might not otherwise be recognised as physical activity such as 'tips', jumping on the trampoline and dancing. Inclusion of these activities is important as intermittent play is

significant in the lives of young children (Malina, 1996; Nilsson, Ekelund, Yngve & Sojostrom, 2002; Pate, Baranowski, Dowda, & Trost, 1996; Salo & Silla, 1997).

Within the WHO definition, some organised sports would not be considered physical activity. These might include motor racing, ten pin bowling, darts etc. While these sports have organised structures – a hierarchical system of administration, rules, codes of conduct and often extensive systems of commodification, they do not meet the physiological criteria for physical activity. The experiences and meaning of the two terms are not synonymous and cannot be used meaningfully in an interchangeable fashion. This thesis will therefore make this distinction where necessary.

Key Theoretical Frameworks and Concepts

This thesis is informed by a number of key theoretical frameworks and concepts. In particular it draws from cultural studies, social constructivist and feminist frameworks in an attempt to understand bodies at the level of the individual and as embodied entities situated within multiple external contexts. This thesis has a further specific focus on the concepts of self-objectification and performative gender, themselves derived from feminist and social constructivist theories, as they apply to children and young people.

Both social constructivist and feminist theories have been employed in this thesis to challenge the assumption that many differences between the performances of men and women, boys and girls, for example, in the context of physical activity, are biologically derived (Choi, 2000). Cultural studies perspectives have been used to explore how the society in which people reside informs their notions and experiences of the world, including ideas about gender and bodies. Feminist theories, in particular

gender rebellion feminisms, are used to argue that certain inequities and differences between men and women are attributable to the social constructions of the societies in which they have arisen and thus can be deconstructed and recreated (Lorber, 2010).

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) argue that women in Western societies are judged and their worth determined, according to their physical appearance. Self-objectification occurs when women internalise society's unrealistically high standards about physical beauty and come to view themselves as an outsider would, defining their self worth based on their perceived ability to live up to these standards. There are a number of demonstrated negative psychological effects of adopting this perspective of the self (e.g., Greenleaf & McGreer, 2006; Hebl, King & Lin, 2004; Miner-Rubino, Twenge & Fredrickson, 2002). Rather than only examining the psychological effects of self-objectification on children and young people, this thesis attempts to move beyond this, to explore how young people 'live' self-objectification in their everyday lives and what circumstances might contribute or impact on this. Performative gender also provides an interesting and informative framework in which to consider young people lived experiences, including that of self-objectification.

Theories of performative gender build upon the idea of gender as a social construction, informed by the external as well as an individual's internal world. Usner (1997) uses performative gender to explain how women can psychologically and physically move between different 'scripts' of femininity, in different contexts, reiterating the idea that femininity and masculinity are not static states. This feminist theory is particularly useful when it comes to interpreting girls and subsequently boys, experiences in the context physical activity as physical activity is a context heavily laden with gendered meanings. This thesis will use Usner's (1997) concept of

performative gender and apply it to children and adolescents, girls and boys, in a variety of external contexts, particularly physical activity, in order to try and gain a better understanding of their experiences.

Studies 1 and 2

Using predominantly developmental and cognitive psychological frameworks (although the Self-Objectification Questionnaire did emerge out of a feminist framework), the first study aims to examine gender and developmental differences in physical self-concept (using the Physical Self Perception Profile for Children and Youth – PSPP-CY (Welk et al., 1995; Whitehead, 1995)), self-objectification (using the Self-Objectification Questionnaire – SOQ (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998)) and the extent to which children and young people understand and adopt societal ideals regarding the presentation of their bodies (using the Socio-Cultural Attitudes to Appearance Questionnaire – revised edition – SATAQ ((Heinberg, Thompson & Stormer, 1995; Smolak et al., 2001))). It will also examine gender and developmental differences in physical activity.

Although this thesis replicates some aspects of earlier studies, it also offers a unique perspective. This thesis extends the understanding of the acquisition of physical self-concept into a significantly larger developmental period than other studies. It investigates the years between late childhood and adolescence whereas earlier studies have focused on narrower developmental windows. Like other research this study considers early adolescence, the age at which young people commence physical maturation and both peak and then begin to decrease their participation in exercise. Unlike previous studies, this thesis includes examination of the developmental periods immediately preceding and following early adolescence in order to explore developmental information. Furthermore, the first study extends

existing knowledge by examining the tendency to self-objectify (i.e. to view oneself from an external perspective) which occurs in individuals in the late childhood of both genders. The use of the Self-Objectification Questionnaire (SOQ) in this age group enables examination of previously unexplored relationships between self-objectification and other more widely used measures of physical self-concept and socio-cultural attitudes to body ideals.

The second study uses an innovative and complementary qualitative methodology to continue to explore gender and developmental differences in physical self-concept in the lived experiences of young people. Study 2 draws upon various feminist and cultural perspectives as well as phenomenology to make this unique examination. Study 2 uses drawings and individual interviews to explore children and adolescents' perceptions and experiences of their bodies and the influences informing these. It will particularly focus on the lived experiences of self-objectification in the lives of young people of both genders, paying close attention to how context can impact on young people's perceptions and experiences of their bodies. At the current time little is known about the complex gendered and other negotiations that children make with regard to their bodies. Performative gender will be used as a framework useful in understanding the negotiations that occur.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Bodies

Linked to the rise of consumer capitalism then is the prevalent notion the people in the west, not just female people or young people, are experiencing a significantly different relationship to their bodies than previous generations.

The body has become a spectacle, as the visual takes precedent over other ways of knowing the world (Frost, 2003, p.54).

Overview

Understanding and exploring roles, meanings, interpretations and experiences of the body are essential to this thesis and must be considered in their socio-cultural context. This chapter, while focusing on the experiences and meanings attributed to physical bodies, will also serve to highlight the theoretical lenses through which the data in this thesis will be examined. These include the lenses of developmental psychology, cultural studies, social constructivist and feminist theory.

Historically, Western philosophies have invited us to view the body as the lesser of the body/mind dichotomy. This way of viewing bodies has had an enduring impact on the ways in which the modern bodies are viewed and understood. This world view has contributed to similar analogies regarding the differences between the genders with the male/mind viewed as superior to the female/ body. There has also been a tendency to medicalise bodies, to present them as inherently biological and objective; removed from their social, political and economic context. Feminist authors such as Elizabeth Grosz (1994) and Mary Douglas (1970, 1980) have revisited and re-asserted the centrality of physical bodies, resisting dichotomous thinking about corporality and rejecting a-historical and a-cultural interpretations of bodies. Rather they invite specific exploration of bodies and experiences in context. More recent feminist

writings (e.g., Butler, 2004; Davis, Evans & Lorber, 2006; Lorber, 2010) have described the powerful role of social construction in defining gender and the role of personal agency and performance.

In modern Westernised societies bodies have become central to individuals' representations of themselves having both literal and powerful symbolic meanings (Bordo, 1991; Brumberg, 1997; Reischer & Koo, 2004). In countries like Australia and the U.S.A., beauty or physical attractiveness is increasingly important for both men and women. Idealised presentations of bodies are deemed to reflect important information about the moral, emotional and/or spiritual value of their owners. Such idealised presentations often reflect societally dominant notions of gender (Bordo, 1993, 2003; Connell, 1995; Douglas, 1970, 1980; Hargreaves, 1994; Pope et al., 2000).

However, bodies are not just social constructions, nor are they completely passive in the messages they convey and reinforce (Butler, 1990, 1993; Choi & Pitts, 2003; Connell, 1987, 1995, 2000; Kimmell & Messner, 2004; Reicher & Koo, 2004). For example, when gender is viewed as a series of complex socially constructed performances, the physical body becomes an important site of agency and enactment. 'Embodied' bodies therefore play a significant and complex role in the construction, reinforcement and subversion of gender (e.g., Butler, 2004; Usser, 1997).

While the experiences of young people have been examined through health psychology, developmental and even feminist frameworks by measuring body related concepts such as body image, physical self-esteem and physical activity levels, the 'lived' experiences of young people in regards to their bodies, its performances and negotiations have been largely neglected. Therefore, an extended understanding of

young people's experiences of their bodies from cultural studies, social constructivist and feminist viewpoints will be a specific focus of this thesis, using both qualitative and quantitative research designs.

Historical Frameworks

Historically, Western philosophers have consistently presented the human body as the lesser of two binary opposites with the physical body and the mind/spirit viewed as two distinct and separate entities (Plato; Descartes, 1980). The use of binary opposites acts to privilege one form, in this case the mind, over the other. The body often defines the inferior form in terms of qualities that the other possesses and which it does not. Dualist perspectives continue to inform much of present day thinking. The physical body has come to be associated with being “unruly, disruptive, in need of direction and judgment” (Grosz, 1994, p.3) and is often represented as alien, imprisoning/confining and as an enemy to be combated (Bordo, 1993). Those who obtain ‘enlightenment’ are able to overcome the weight, weaknesses and desires of the flesh, i.e., the physical body, through its taming and subjugation (Bordo, 1993). Dualistic descriptions of the body have also led to “define the body in non-historical, naturalistic, organic, passive, inert terms” in which cultural and historical context is largely disregarded (Grosz, 1994, pp.3-4), a position rejected by advocates of cultural studies and social constructivism.

An example of the enduring impact of dualistic thinking is the way in which biological sex and gender, among other things, are represented in modern Westernized societies. In patriarchal societies, the male form is seen as superior, free from the perceived negative influences of reproductive biology which tie women innately to

their bodies (Grosz, 1994, p.14). The idealized male form of the body, young, White, muscular, heterosexual and middle class, then becomes the model against which all other forms, including gender, race, class etc., are compared.

Grosz (1994) suggests that Cartesian dualism has resulted in three prevailing views of the body. These are:

1. The body as an object – able to be studied objectively by the sciences
2. The body as mechanistic – a metaphor that allows the body to be viewed as a machine or instrument (Grosz, 1994, p.9).
3. The body as a communicator or mode of expression – having the capacity to express inner states (e.g., thoughts, feelings, beliefs etc.) otherwise inaccessible to the outer world.

Beyond Dualism

Cultural studies, social constructivist theories and the gender rebellion strands of feminism, provide a useful framework for moving beyond dualism. They provide alternative views of the physical body and recognise it as being neither natural nor static. For example, Merleau-Ponty (1962) believes that the physical body is central to our experiences of the world, stating that it is through movement and interaction with others and with objects that we form the basis of having a world and ultimately for understanding our experiences. Because the body must be lived within the world it cannot be understood as an object separated from it. From this view point, information coming from the world is filtered first through the body. Therefore, experience is not neutral, but rather coloured by its specific context. Furthermore, biology results in certain physical possibilities which then interact with external contexts, making some physical presentations more likely than others. However, this does not make them natural (Douglas, 1980; Grosz, 1994).

Connell (1995, 2000) and his brand of social constructivist feminism in masculinities studies argues that interactions occur between individuals and their environments. Connell explains that these experiences are then understood and given symbolic representation, thus providing further meaning to experiences which in turn impacts on later experiences. Bodies, therefore, become both “objects and agents of practice, and the practice itself forming the structures within which bodies are appropriated and defined” (Connell, 1995, *p.61*). He refers to this as ‘body-reflexive practice’.

Monism as adopted by Grosz (1994) views the body in conjunction with the mind and rather than seeing it as a separate entity. She views them as representing different aspects of the same thing. In this perspective the body is no longer viewed mechanistically, but as a living and constantly changing process, continuously informed from the inside and out rather like the analogy of a mobius strip. As such, no one true nature exists, but rather the body is subject to the historical and social context in which it exists.

Feminist and various social constructivist perspectives have built upon these ideas constructing views of the body which allow for greater integration and interaction with context, as well as allowing for degrees of personal volition. In particular, they challenge notions of ‘real’ or ‘natural’ bodies and situate bodies within social, historical and cultural contexts, providing them with the capacity to act and interact within the world. Such perspectives also recognize that the physical body may be symbolic, a mechanism of social power and change, and an embodied symbolic self with agency (Grosz, 1994; Reishcher & Koo, 2004).

Symbolic Value of Bodies

Informed by theories of social constructivism, it is argued, therefore, that bodies are never neutral and have important symbolic value, playing a central role in the construction and maintenance of social control, among other things (Bordo, 1993; Connell, 1995; Douglas, 1970; Reishcher & Koo, 2004). Foucault (1979) identified the role of the body in the political sphere stating that “power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs” (p.25). Bodies therefore may be inscribed both forcibly and voluntarily. They can be marked through acts of violence and through contact with various institutions (e.g., prisons, hospitals) but also voluntarily by individuals in the form of procedures, life-styles, habits, and behaviours. “Make-up, stilettos, bras, hair sprays, clothing and underclothing mark women’s bodies, whether Black or White, in ways in which hair styles, professional training, personal grooming, gait, posture, body building, and sports may mark men’s within the modern context” (Grosz, 1994, p.142). Therefore, although bodily habits and routines may also come be seen as real and natural, in reality, they reflect the broader cultural conditions and systems of control (Douglas, 1970; Foucault, 1979; Grosz, 1994).

Douglas (1982) in her anthropological approach describes “the body, as a form, a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and thus reinforced through the concrete language of the body” (cited in Bordo 2003, p. 165). She uses the metaphor of the body as a text, both reflecting the world and capable of being read by others in the world. As such, the body is no longer considered natural, but rather conveys a multitude of important and complex social messages about the individual both consciously and subconsciously, messages that individuals within a given society become adept at reading (Douglas,

1982; Reischer & Koo, 2004). Importantly, bodies with their particular presentations and markings have the capacity to identify individuals as acceptable or unacceptable within a given cultural context and within Anglo Westernized countries. Some of the most important messages or symbolisms about acceptable bodies occur in the context of 'beauty' (Balsamo, 1993; Bordo, 1993; Grosz, 1994).

In the current social and historical context certain body shapes and presentations are promoted over others as are the behavioural practices that accompany these such as gestures, postures and movements (Sparkes, 1997). These external body presentations have come to symbolize the self, including the morality and personality of its possessor (Glassner, 1990; Lupton, 1996). According to Bordo (1993) and her postmodern cultural studies feminist approach, "the firm, developed body has become a symbol of the correct attitude" implying "willpower, energy, control over infantile impulse, the ability to shape your life" (p.195). 'Fat' or 'loose skin' is seen to reflect the inferior morality of its owner (Bordo, 1993). For example, in Western societies the thin body is associated with wealth, success, discipline and control. The fat body has been demonized representing laziness, greed, lack of discipline and control and indulgence (DeJong & Kleck, 1981; Harris, Harris & Bochner, 1982; Hebl & Kleck, 2002; Sparkes, 1997).

Young people are not exempt from such 'body reading' and quickly become adept 'readers' of the bodies of others and themselves. Evidence of this is found in research that indicates that overweight young people often experience much the same discrimination and harassment as overweight and obese adults. For example, a landmark study by Richardson, Goodman, Hastorf and Dornbusch (1961) found that overweight young people were rated as less desirable playmates than children with disabilities or facial disfigurements. More recent studies have also found that

overweight young people may be stereotyped as being lonely, slow, unhappy, ashamed, lazy and sloppy, while thin individuals are judged as being friendly, smart, kind, and honest (Greenleaf, Chambliss, Rhea, Martin & Morrow, 2006, *p.* 550). Furthermore, fat students were thought to be less healthy and less physically active than thin peers. More recently, Sykes and McPhail (2008) use the term 'fat phobic' to describe dominant societal discourses which influence the ways in which fat and overweight individual are viewed and treated by themselves and others. Other studies have revealed negative 'fat' stereotypes in people as young as three years of age (Brylinksky & Moore, 1994; Cramer & Steinwert, 1998; Hill & Silver, 1995; Lerner & Jovanovic, 1990; Tiggemann & Wilson-Barrett, 1998; Turnbull, Heaslip & McLeod, 2000).

Body Projects and Consumerism

From a social constructivist and cultural studies perspective, consumerism and the media have been identified as playing important roles in promoting and reinforcing particular symbolisms and images of the body, particularly those associated with femininity and masculinity (Brace-Govan, 2002; Smith, 1990). Business and the media have a commercial investment in establishing and maintaining culturally desirable symbols involving their products which are strongly linked to physical appearances of the body. For example, Hargreaves (1994) argues that women's external appearances and body projects have been consumerised with physical exercise, such as aerobics, marketed as an acceptable way of achieving the right – slim, toned, sexy 'look'.

The idealized image of the adolescent female body is of one that is, through regular attention, and costly procedures, beautified and sexualized. Sweat and muscularity are not associated with this but physical activities like aerobics are packaged with other commodities such as clothing. Thus, teenage femininity is coded in the language of consumerism and profit" (Hargreaves, 1994, *p.14*).

In this context, regular exercise is a priority but only if it is in the pursuit of beauty and increased physical attractiveness. Women's and more recently men's 'athletic looking', eroticized bodies are being used to expand consumer markets and sell images of health and fashion associated with beauty products (Hargreaves, 1994; *p.22*; Rowe & McKay, 1998).

Growth in female sport has been linked with the commercialization of the sexualized female body. Sportswear is designed to promote a sexy image, making statements about femaleness and enhancing heterosexual sexuality. It is combined with other beauty aids, the right hair and adornments, to construct a total image (Hargreaves, 1994, *p.15*).

Put simply, the fashion industry serves as an "instruction manual" for women and girls, teaching them about femininity and how to be a woman, driven by broader societal discourses about heterosexuality and femininity (Smith, 1990). When women or men fail to live up to these standards they must embark on endeavours to transform their bodies in order to conform (Wolf, 1991). Ideals are set so unrealistically high that people, particularly women, constantly see their bodies as a 'work in progress' or as a body requiring discipline and transformation. The body discontent that results is profitable socially and economically to large scale organizations, but not to individual women.

Many feminist and cultural studies' theorists, therefore, argue that consumer culture is designed to encourage individuals to strive towards body transformation goals. The promotion of these kinds of cultural values and symbolisms is tied to the increase in problematic body image issues including eating disorders for women and men (Hargreaves, 1994; Pope et al., 2000a; Wolf, 1991). Some have also argued that, in addition, body image issues and disorders as well as absorption in personal body projects has resulted in neglect of broader, more meaningful social projects (Bordo, 1993; Wolf, 1991; Reicher & Koo, 2004). For example, Bordo (1990) who was strongly influenced by Foucaultian theory (as will be discussed in the next section), believes that preoccupation with fat, diet and slenderness has become one of the most powerful 'normalising' strategies of our century, ensuring the production of self monitoring and self-disciplining 'docile' bodies, especially for women.

Agency in Constructing the Body

Beliefs have varied regarding agency in constructing the body. Early writings positioned women as helpless and passive slates onto which external values were inscribed. However, more recently, authors that would fall into Lorbers (2010) gender rebellion feminists, argue that in creating particular external appearances, individuals exhibit agency (e.g., Butler, 2004; Connell, 2000, 1995; Kimmel & Messner, 2004; Reicher & Koo, 2004; Usser, 1997). Therefore, individuals are influenced by wider societal forces and many conform and strive for culturally valued presentations of physical appearance with differing degrees of intent. Furthermore, it is possible for individuals to simultaneously resist and conform to culturally sanctioned norms of physical appearance (Choi & Pitts, 2003; Bolin, 1992; Hall, 1996). For example, Choi and Pitts (2003) found that female body builders resisted

popular notions of femininity by seeking an ultra-muscular appearance, but conformed to these same notions by ensuring that other identifiable markers of femininity were present through the use of makeup and other adornments.

Contemporary Conceptual Frameworks of the Body

Many contemporary frameworks for viewing the body have focused on women rather than men, using feminist theories but also drawing on earlier philosophical positions. For example, borrowing from Foucaultian theory, the concept of panoptic vision has been applied by feminist and sociological perspectives to explain women's views of themselves regarding their physical bodies. Panoptic vision was used by Foucault to explain how symbolic power could be used to replace physical power in certain situations. For example, perceptions of constant observation from a centralised point within prison could be used to control the behaviour of prisoners even when they were not being physically observed (Foucault, 1979). The observed then become the enforcers of their own behaviour. Panoptic vision has been incorporated into feminist theory to explain how the externalized gaze of others may come to be internalized and adopted by individual women who come to identify it as their own personal belief or value (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Foucault also introduced the concept of 'docile bodies' – bodies which are rendered docile by the ongoing imposition of disciplinary power. In this view bodies can be acted upon, regulated, transformed and improved (Foucault, 1979). This is a view also adopted by later feminist and social constructivist theorists.

Several feminist theorists argue that the feminine body is constructed as a sexualized object 'to be looked at', particularly by men. When the body is treated as an object, this results in them being treated like as inanimate objects rather than a

person with feelings and emotions (McKinley & Hyde, 1996; Spitzack, 1990). If woman also go on to adopt this perspective of themselves, they too can treat their bodies as depersonalised objects which they are responsible for. Many contemporary feminist frameworks focus on the experiences of women in respect to this and only peripherally speculate on the experiences of men.

Young's (1990) feminist based account was among the first to directly link observable body experiences with earlier theoretical perspectives of the body. She believes that sexual objectification is central in defining womanhood in Western societies. An example of this is the belief that women will be gazed upon, scrutinized by others, and treated as an object rather than as a person with volitions of their own. Based on observations of the throwing action of young girls and their failure to make use of lateral space by Straus (1966), Young (1980) called upon the early social constructivist theories of de Beauvoir (1974) and Merleau-Ponty, (1962) to argue that gender differences in throwing and other physical activities could not be accounted for solely by physiology, nor some "mysterious feminine essence", but rather explanations needed to take into account the social, cultural and historical situation of women, particularly that of patriarchy.

Young (1980) adopted Merleau-Ponty's (1962) belief that women live in a constant contradiction between feeling themselves transcendent as people, but 'situated' as non-transcendent when experiencing life as women being regarded merely as an object or as 'other' to man. Linking theory to bodily actions, Young states:

not only is there a typical style of throwing like a girl, but there is more or less a typical style of running like a girl, climbing like a girl, swinging like a girl, hitting like a girl etc. These actions have in common, first that

the whole body is not put into fluid and directed motion..... and second, that the women's motion tends not to reach, extend, lean, stretch, and follow through in the direction of her intention (Young, 1980, *p.143*)

and that there is a "failure to make full use of the body's spatial and lateral potentialities" (Young, 1980, *p.142*).

There are several proposed reasons for the inhibition of women's physical motions. Firstly, women lack the belief and/or underestimate their physical capacity to perform particular tasks, specifically those involving purposeful whole body movement requiring strength and that test the abilities of the body (Young, 1980). Secondly, women have a greater fear of being injured and dividing their attention between achieving a task and monitoring for potential harm. Thirdly, women may be self-conscious about how they look in performing a task and fear appearing too strong, again dividing attention because "for feminine existence the body is frequently both subject and object for itself at the same time and in reference to the same act" (Young, 1980, *p.148*).

As a result, not only are girls denied the opportunity and role models needed to develop bodily movements similar to boys, but they are also taught "many subtle habits of feminine body comportment" such as walking, sitting and gesturing which inhibit their ability to fully develop bodily movement (Young, 1980, *p.153*). Further they are taught about other restrictions, necessary to avoid becoming hurt or dirty. In summary, Young believes that girls are taught to regard their bodies as objects (subject to the gaze and intentions of others) as well as subjects. This experience results in disunity with the self and inhibited body motions.

Franzoi (1995) suggests that individuals may view their bodies in one of two ways. To take a 'body-as-object' perspective, individuals see their bodies as made up of specific individual parts (e.g., thighs, hips, stomach etc.). Alternatively, individuals may see their bodies as a functional process (body-as-process). Franzoi (1995) suggests that it is typically women who take on the 'body as object' perspective, while men are more likely to view the body as functional or as process.

Self-Objectification

Furthering the ideas of Young and others, another important feminist theory relating to women's experiences with their physical bodies is that of self-objectification. McKinley & Hyde (1996) argue that study into women's 'body experience' is important because previous research suggests that it happens but not how it happens. For example, it has been shown that gender roles and pressure from the media results in women feeling negatively towards their physical bodies. Research does not explain how it occurs. Self-objectification, as conceptualized by Fredrickson & Roberts (1997), is the tendency for women to internalize Western society's penchant to sexualize and judge women based on various aspects of their physical appearance. An individual's capacity to live up to these standards ultimately determines their self-worth. When viewed in this way, individuals see themselves as objects to be viewed and judged according to externally dictated criteria for beauty. Individuals come to view themselves from an outsider's perspective and tend to determine their physical self-concept based on observable, appearance-based attributes rather than non-observable, functionality based attributes.

Another important precept of objectification theory is that women will experience the negative consequences of self-objectification whether or not they feel satisfied with their body. It is argued that the simple focus on physical appearance

results in a variety of negative consequences such as depression, body shame and anxiety (Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998).

Self-objectification can occur at both the trait and state levels. It is thought that women's constant exposure to objectified images and experiences results in higher levels of trait self-objectification, the more stable and consistent form of self-objectification, than men (Fredrickson et al., 1998; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). However, self-objectification may also be induced by particular circumstances, identified as state self-objectification, for example, by trying on one piece swimmers or even looking at objectifying images or text (Fredrickson et al., 1998; Hebl et al., 2004; Kittler, 2003; Roberts & Gettman, 2004).

Feminist theories of self-objectification can also be applied to the experiences of men and men have also been found to self-objectify (e.g., Fredrickson et al., 1998; Hebl et al., 1994; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005; Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004). It has been argued that while males are increasingly being subjected to sexual objectification in the media and advertising with a view to extending consumer markets (Bordo, 1999; Pope, Olivardia, Borowiecki & Cohane, 2001; Rohlinger, 2002), the nature and experience of objectification is likely to be different to that of women (Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004). McKinley (1998) argues that while men may take on this external perspective of themselves, it may manifest itself in different areas to women. For example, men may be less concerned with physical appearance but more concerned with sexual abilities and success in the financial realm. In addition, Roberts and Gettman (2004) suggest that it is important "to distinguish between taking on an observers point-of-view on the physical self, and actually viewing the physical self as an object" and that women are encouraged by popular culture to do both, whereas men may be encouraged to do only the former (p.25).

Physical Self-Concept

Coming from a psychological perspective, several authors have attempted to quantify individuals' views and feelings about their bodies. Fox (1997) views the physical body as intrinsic to understanding the total individual. He argues that the body, as a publicly available entity, is central in interactions with others, in health and bodily functionality. He is particularly concerned with what he terms physical self-concept (Fox, 1997).

Self-concept and physical self-concept are both theoretical constructs which research would suggest are multidimensional and hierarchical in nature. Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976, cited in Fox, 1997) describe self-concept "as a person's self-perceptions that are formed through their experiences with and interpretations of his/her environment" (*p.34*). Self concept is different from body image which is more closely related to how individuals' feel and evaluate themselves based on their physical appearance.

Within the hierarchical model of self-concept proposed by Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976), general self-concept appears at the top-level, followed by academic and non-academic self-concepts. This non-academic self-concept becomes more highly defined still and is divided into social, emotional, and physical self-concepts. The preceding levels are further divided again becoming increasingly specific but less stable concepts (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976). A number of qualitative measures have been developed to investigate physical self-perceptions including the Physical Self-Concept Scales (Richards, 1987), and the Physical Self-Description Questionnaire (PSDQ) (Marsh, Richards, Johnson, Roche, & Tremayne, 1994).

However, one of the most extensively validated and well used measures of physical self-concept is the Physical Self Perception Profile (PSPP) (Fox, 1990; Fox & Corbin, 1989; Ostrow, 1990). The PSPP proposes a hierarchical model with global self-esteem at the pinnacle. Under this are a number of domains, sub-domains, facets, sub-facets, and at the bottom, states (see Figure 1). On the basis of his work, Fox (1990) proposes five scales relating to physical self-concept including: Sport - relating to various elements of athletic ability; Condition - relating to various elements of stamina; Body - relating to various elements of attractiveness; Strength - relating to various elements of strength and muscle development; and Global Physical Self-worth - relating to overall feelings of satisfaction with the physical self (Fox, 1997). "Within each scale, questions were designed to reflect product (good at sport), process (good sport skills), and perceived confidence (confidence in sport), thus representing a multifaceted, taxonomic model" (Fox, 1997, *p.*41).

Using factor analysis, Fox found good support for his model (including good reliability and construct validity). Although originally developed and validated with American university students, the PSPP and a version developed for children (PSPP-C or Y-PSPP) has now been used more broadly with children as young as 8 years (Welk & Eklund, 2005).

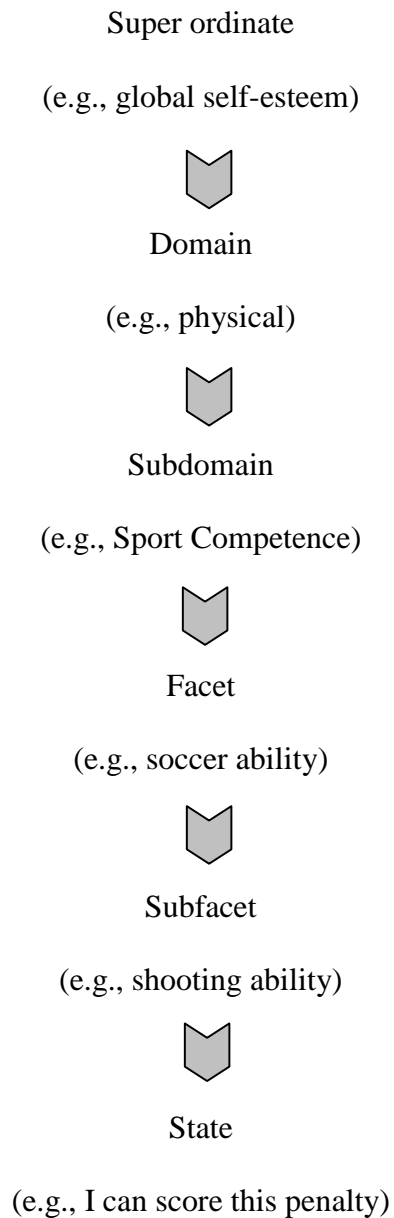


Figure 1. Fox's (1997) conceptualization of the hierarchical nature of self-perception (p.141).

Studies using the PSPP and other measures have found a strong association between physical self-perceptions and self-esteem and overall self-concept (see Fox, 1997 for a summary, Bracken, 1992; Mendelson & White, 1985). In particular, some researchers suggest that physical appearance is one of the strongest contributors to overall self-concept. Such research included studies of children as young as seven

years of age (Burnett, 1994; Boiven, Vitaro, & Grogan, 1992; Raustorp, Stahle, Gudasic, Kinnunen & Mattsson, 2005). Fox (1997) surmises that “throughout the many studies with the PSPP, the construct of bodily attractiveness has dominated physical self-worth” (p.122). There is evidence that physical self-concept remains relatively stable across childhood (Crain & Bracken, 1994).

Physical self-concept is thought to influence several other behaviours and outcomes such as physical activity levels (Welk & Eklund, 2005). Additionally, it has been tied to motivational theories of physical activity, as well as fitness levels, self-esteem, body image and eating behaviours (Biddle, 1997; Crocker, Eklund & Kowalski, 2000; Fox, 1997; Harter, 1982; Sonstroem, 1997).

Gender differences have consistently been found in physical self-concept scores with boys, on average, scoring higher than girls in all domains (Klomsten, Marsh, & Skaalvick, 2004; Marsh, 1989; Marsh, Craven, & Debus, 1991; Stein, Bracken, Haddock & Shadish, 1998; Welk, Corbin, & Lewis, 2005; Welk & Eklund, 2005; Wilgensbusch & Merrell, 1999; Whitehead & Corbin, 1997). Gender differences have been attributed to differences in perceived competency and wider social influences which emphasize the importance of physical competency to boys and physical appearance to girls (Hagger et al., 2004; Welk & Eklund, 2005). Hagger et al., a (2004) also states that “because self-concept scales tend to tap constructs such as confidence and assertiveness, qualities that are typically viewed as “masculine” characteristics, it is to be expected that boys tended to report higher levels of physical self-concept” (p.316).

Limited research suggests that self-concept and physical self-concept may differ with age. However, most studies indicate that “even young children hold independent perceptions of sport competence, physical condition, strength and body attractiveness”

(Welk & Eklund, 2005, *p.*62; Welk, Corbin, Nann Dowell, & Harris, 1997). Patterns in the developmental data suggest that physical self-concept decreases with age, particularly between pre-adolescence and adolescence and particularly for girls. However, effect sizes have often been small (Hagger et al., 2004; Marsh 1989; 1990; Marsh & Craven, 1997; Marsh, Barnes, Cairns & Tidman, 1984; Stein et al., 1998; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994).

Higher physical self-concept scores (as measured by the PSPP-CY) have also been correlated with increased physical activity, particularly for boys, possibly as a result of actual differences in physical fitness or due to differences in values and expectations (Hagger, Ashford, & Stambulova, 1998; Welk & Eklund, 2005). Raustorp et al., (2005) also found a negative correlation between BMI and all the scales of the PSPP-CY, except for physical strength.

The PSPP-CY therefore provides a comprehensive measure of physical self-concept and its varied components. It has been used extensively in research with both boys and girls, of varying ages, from multiple countries across the world. As a result of its strong psychometric properties and extensive use with the similar age groups to those used in this study, the PSPP-CY is the measure of physical self-concept chosen to be used by this study.

Gendered Bodies

The findings of gender differences in physical self-concept on psychologically based assessments, therefore, direct the focus to identified gender differences between boys and girls. In keeping with the social constructivist, cultural studies approach adopted by this study, the concept of gendered bodies will be informed by key proponents of this approach such as Connell (e.g., 1995; 2000; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). According to Connell (2000), whose work has been framed by

studies in masculinities, "bodies are arenas for the making of gender patterns".

Connell believes that gender is a social practice closely tied to the body and the practices of the body (*p.12*). In addition the writer explains that gender is configurations of social practice as well as the process of configuring social practices surrounding and involving the physical body. Such configurations may be found in the individual and their actions, but also exist in collective practices such as those found in large scale institutions, such as schools and in economic relations (Connell, 2000).

More extensive discussion of gender occurs later in this chapter. It is important consider first some key aspect of male and female bodies.

Men's Bodies

The physical body is often presented as the central defining characteristic of masculinity and "true masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies" (Connell, 1995; pp. 45). Connell states that "masculine gender is (among other things) a certain feel to the skin, certain muscular shapes and tensions, certain postures and ways of moving, certain possibilities in sex" (Connell, 1995; pp. 52-53). Thus, for Connell, the body is not just a social construction; it is also a physical entity. This supports the earlier ideas of Shilling (1993) and Turner (1991). According to Connell the physicality of the body is central to men's identities. Others suggest that to learn to be male is to learn "to project a physical presence that speaks of latent power" (Whitson, 1990, *p.23*).

Participation in sporting activities plays a central role in the physical embodiment of masculinity (Connell, 1995; Hargreaves, 1994; Pope et al., 2000a). A common presentation of men's bodies, particularly in the sporting arena, is that of 'combatant', 'warrior' or 'machine' (Morse, 1983; Trujillo, 2001). Such views of men

and their bodies portray them as strong – physically and mentally disciplined, able to overcome the everyday demands of the body through sheer willpower and single minded determination. Morse (1983) argues that men's bodies come to be viewed mechanistically, or as a combative warrior, due to societal prohibitions on viewing men voyeuristically as objects; a process considered a privileged position available only to men in relation to women. Viewing men's bodies as a powerful machines or mechanisms of combat, however, is considered a valid way of admiring or viewing themselves.

The male physical body is, therefore, seen as being used to produce effects and power through the practiced use of force and skill (Whitson, 1990). This embodiment of strength and power is thought to be an empowering experience for many men and boys. It is common for media messages to align masculinity with physical power, financial power, precision and technical expertise through consumer choices (Barthel, 1994). Contrary to the societal messages given to women, messages about boys and men tell them that they are to use their bodies in functional ways that will allow them to control and master themselves and their environment (Stephens, Hill, & Hanson, 1994).

Research framed by media studies of the social construction of gender and masculinity have found that boys and men are also increasingly presented with societal messages about the importance of physical appearance, especially muscularity, to their masculine identity (Alexander, 2003; Connell, 1983; Gill, Henwood & McLean, 2000; Pope et al., 2000a). Alexander (2003) examined representations of masculinity in Men's Health magazines. In examining the covers of this magazine she found an emphasis on young, white, shirtless males with well but not over developed abdominal and arm muscles. Physical muscularity in men is

synonymous with athleticism, power, strength and virulent heterosexual masculinity (Connell, 2000; Griffin, 1998; Rowe & McKay, 1998). Current conceptions of the ideal male body value muscularity and body shapes demonstrating broad shoulders, muscular upper chest, thin waist and a flat muscular stomach (Leit, Pope, & Gray, 2001). Masculinity, confidence and attractiveness can be enhanced through the development of increased musculature (Edwards & Launder, 2000). According to Jones (2001) height, facial attributes and build are all important components of attractiveness for adolescent males. Thus for boys and men both the functionality of their body as well as their bodies' appearance are deemed important with some presentations and uses more highly valued than others (Bathel, 1994; Glassner, 1995; Goffman, 1979; Jhally, 1995; Kimmell, 1996; LaFrance, 1995; McAllister, 1996; Messner, 1995; Williamson, 1978; Rohlinger, 2002).

Although the physical body is central to masculinity, advocates of social constructions of gender would argue that it is never fixed or unchanging, as this would defy the experiences of aging, injury, socio-cultural context or personal agency (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005)). Therefore, although popular culture would lead people to believe that men's bodies singularly define masculinity, Connell would argue that men's bodies equally reflect the gender politics of wider society where men's bodies are sites of complex interactions with other individuals and the world, and where physical experiences play a central role (Connell, 2000). By adopting a position that recognizes both the physical and the social, a greater understanding of lived realities is possible (Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1991).

Women's Bodies

Becoming a woman in a patriarchal society demands the embodiment of femininity, that is, dissociating from one's own physical hungers (e.g., food, sex) and training the body in how to move (and not move) appropriately to conform with 'ladylike' norms of physicality (Bartky, 1990; Tolman & Debold, 1993; Tolman, Impett, Tracey & Michael, 2006). Physicality, with an emphasis on physical beauty, has been a specific category of experience for women historically (Banner, 1983). According to Balsamo, (1996), "the body becomes...the site at which women, consciously or not, accept the meanings that circulate in popular culture about ideal beauty....The female body comes to serve as a site of inscription, a billboard for the dominant meanings that the female body is to have in postmodernity" (p.78).

Brumberg (1997), in her book examining the diaries of American girls from the late 1800's until the 1990's, argues that the "body has become the central personal project of American girls" (p.97). Her research suggests that in the earlier parts of the last century girls did not define themselves by their external physical appearance as girls and young women do now, arguing that girls today "believe that the body is the ultimate expression of the self" (Brumberg, 1997, p.97). Furthermore, she found evidence that some girls currently engage in dieting and exercise for the purposes of not only changing their bodies, but in the hope of transforming their image and identity in the world (Brumberg, 1997, p.104).

For women in Anglo Westernized countries bodies are currently central to attractiveness and femininity and the three are intrinsically linked with those judged as being more attractive also seen as being more feminine (Mazur, 1986). It is through appearance and appropriate movement and performances that femininity can be achieved. The current ideal bodies of women reflect this with women expected to

strive for slender, toned bodies without excessive musculature (Brumberg, 1997; Choi, 2000). Firm breasts, tight butts, height and attractive facial attributes are also desired (Jones, 2001; Klomsten, et al., 2005). Physical activity is often seen as a way to produce these idealized bodies. It could be argued that for many women, the product of participation in physical activity, a slender, toned body, has become more important than the function of physical activity itself (Mutrie & Choi, 2000).

Social constructivist frameworks for the study of femininity and masculinity provide a comprehensive approach for understanding the complex experiences of men and women's embodiment. In this thesis the perspectives of authors writing from such frameworks are highly valued and form key focus areas e.g., self-objectification and performative gender. These theoretical frameworks also provide the foundation for understanding of the individual and collective experiences of children and young people in this study.

The Experiences of Children

Much of the psychologically driven research on issues such as physical self-concept, body image etc., reveals that even young children are aware of and strive for adult notions of physical attractiveness in regards to their bodies. An example is that girls as young as six years desire increased thinness (Brodie, Bagley, & Slade, 1994; Collins, 1991; Gustafson-Larson & Terry, 1992; Grogan & Wainwright, 1996; Hill & Pallin, 1998; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Maloney, McGuire, Daniels, & Specker, 1989; Pine, 2001; Rolland, Farnill, & Griffiths, 1997; Schur et al., 2000; Thelen & Cormier, 1995; Thompson, Corwin, & Sargent, 1997; Tiggemann & Pennington, 1990; Tiggemann & Wilson-Barrett, 1998; Wood, Becker, & Thomas, 1996).

However, little research has focused on young people's corporality from a feminist or cultural studies perspective and how young people negotiate these societal expectations.

According to Brace-Govan (2002) it is important to gain an understanding of how young people "experience and negotiate their bodies in living contexts" (p.407). While focused on the experiences of girls, the developmental period of adolescence is of particular importance. Scranton (1992) argues that although physical changes do occur at adolescence it is "social and ideological pressures, linked to sexuality and body physique...together that produce inhibitions on mobility and movement for adolescent girls" (p.105). She suggests that this demands more thorough investigation.

Summary

The physical body is central in the lives of women, men and young people. Embodiment is a complex mix of biological possibilities, societal influences and personal agency. Psychologically focused research has extensively examined specific constructions related to the body. These include self-esteem, physical self-concept, body image etc. Rejecting many of the historical influences of Cartesian dualism, sociological perspectives such as cultural studies and feminist studies have resisted a-historical and a-cultural interpretations of bodies and have examined the symbolism and embodiment of bodies without denying personal agency.

The meanings and experiences of young people in regard to their bodies is an important area for future research. Pre-adolescence and adolescence corporality is influenced not only by external societal influences, but also internally by the maturing of bodies and the development of cognitive skills. While influences similar to those affecting adults are likely to occur, young people's body projects, interpretations and negotiations of the influences are likely to be very different. In addition to different

underlying cognitive structures and the influence of changing physical growth, their experiences of their bodies are likely to reflect different social and sub-cultural contexts. These experiences and negotiations have rarely been examined and are of particular importance given the current context of increased eating disorders, obesity and concerns about body image, many of which have their origins in childhood and adolescence. The following section will provide an overview of another area central to young people and their bodies, that of physical activity.

Participation in Physical Activity

Overview

There are long and short-term physical health benefits associated with participation in adequate amounts of physical activity. There is also evidence to suggest that there are social, emotional and psychological benefits to such participation. Conversely, physical inactivity comes at a high cost, not only to the individual, but also to wider society and is largely reflected in health statistics on morbidity and mortality. Despite this, large numbers of adults and young people do not exercise enough to meet international guidelines for adequate physical activity. Participation in physical activity decreases with age overall. Boys and men consistently participate at higher rates than girls and women in all age groups.

Interventions aimed at increasing physical activity levels in young people have met with mixed success. Proponents of cultural studies and social constructivism have long recognised the role that physical activity plays in the construction of gender and this will be discussed extensively in the next section (e.g., Connell, 2000; Messner, 2004). However, despite recognition of a wide variety of factors impacting on physical activity levels in young people, few interventions or studies have focused on how gender as it relates to a young persons' perception of themselves as 'masculine' or 'feminine', impacts on their perceptions of their physical selves and their subsequent participation in physical activity. Authors like Hargreaves (1994) and Choi (2000) suggest that this is likely to be an important, but largely unrecognised issue influencing participation, particularly for girls.

Participation Levels

Australian Guidelines recommend that children and adolescents should perform 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day (AIHW, 2006). Despite these guidelines, the available evidence suggests that many children and adults do not do enough physical activity to gain important health benefits (Stephenson et al., 2000; Armstrong & McManus, 1994; Cale & Almond, 1994; Heath et al., 1994; Roberts et al., 2004; Sallis & Patrick, 1994). Australian data would suggest that up to half of the Australian adult population does not participate in enough physical activity. For children the data is more promising with research suggesting that up to 80% of children in Year 8 (12–13 years old) may be sufficiently active (Booth et al., 1997; Stephenson et al., 2000). However, more recent studies conducted by the World Health Organisation (Roberts et al., 2004) indicate that only 34% of 11 to 15 year olds in a variety of predominantly European countries participate in recommended levels of physical activity. It is important to note that definitions and methods of measurement of physical activity vary considerably in these studies. Therefore the results are not always directly comparable.

Age Differences

Other noticeable trends have also been found in physical activity data. These reflect distinct age and gender patterns. It has been consistently found that younger children participate in physical activity at higher rates than older children and adults (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003a, 2003b, 2008; Corbin, Pangrazi & Masurier, 2004; Roberts et al., 2004). National and international data demonstrates that participation rates generally increase until 11-12 years of age when there is a sharp decrease for both boys and girls (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008; Roberts et al., 2004).

Despite a decrease in participation with age, active children are thought to be more likely to become active adults (Malina, 1996; Telema, Yang, Laakso & Viikari, 1997). Conversely, physical inactivity is also thought to continue from childhood and adolescence into early adulthood (Raitakari, Porkka, Taimela, Telma, Rasanen, & Viikari, 1994). However, age is not the only factor influencing/ reflected in participation rates.

Gender Differences

Gender patterns feature strongly in participation rates for physical activity. Boys and men are more likely to participate in physical activity than are girls and women, both nationally and internationally (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003a, 2003b; Biddle & Armstrong, 1992; Hagger et al., 1998; Hickman, Roberts, & Gaspar de Matos, 2000; Kowalski et al., 1997; Riddoch et al., 2004; Roberts et al., 2004; Ross & Pate, 1987; Vertinsky, 1997). These findings are robust and are evidenced across countries with widely divergent cultural, social and geographical characteristics (Roberts et al., 2004). Gender related differences in drop-out and participation appear to have their origins in early adolescence and the decrease in participation is more pronounced for girls than for boys at this time (Riddoch et al., 2004). Similarly, patterns of gender difference continue into adulthood (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003a, 2003b; Armstrong et al., 1990; Armstrong & Welsman, 1997; Biddle & Armstrong, 1992; Fox, 1994; Hagger et al., 1998; Kowalski et al., 1997; McManus & Armstrong, 1996; Ross & Pate, 1987; Sallis, 1993; Strauss, Rodzlsky, Burack, & Colin, 2001; Vertinsky, 1997).

It should be noted that most of the studies on gender differences in physical activity have come from a health psychology or medical perspective. Such studies do not offer alternative perspectives to understanding gender, for example, as a social

construction, but rather view gender as two dichotomous categories determined by biological sex. As such many of these studies are uncritical in their interpretation of and in the origins of these gendered findings. Research from social constructivist, cultural studies, and feminist frameworks discussed throughout this thesis, offer a critical, richer and alternative interpretations of this same data.

Benefits of Participation in Physical Activity

Regular, vigorous exercise has been associated with long and short term health benefits for young people and adults (see Bauman, 2004; Bouchard, Blair, & Haskell, 2006; Stephenson et al., 2000 for reviews). Participation in physical activity has also been associated with other academic, social and emotional benefits for children, although the evidence is often less clear (Dwyer, Coonan, Leitch, Hetzel & Baghurst, 1983; Dwyer, Sallis, Bizzard, Lazarus & Dean., 2001; Rowland, 2006; Shepard, 1997; Sherill, Holguin & Caywood, 1989; Strauss et al., 2001; Tremblay, Inman & Willms, 2000; Zubrick et al., 1995).

Some of the biggest benefits of participation in adequate amounts of physical activity are in the prevention of current and future poor physical health with many of the long-term health benefits thought to start in childhood and adolescence (Bauman, Bellow, Vita, Brown & Owen, 2002, *p.5*). Adequate physical activity has been implicated in the prevention of coronary heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, cancer (especially colon cancer), diabetes mellitus and injury as a result of falls and fractures through increasing bone density and decreasing the incidence of osteoporosis. Further health benefits include reductions in blood pressure, improved cardio-respiratory function, prevention of obesity and improved psychological health (CDC, 2003) as well as increased life expectancy (Bauman et al., 2002; Blair, Kohl, Barlow, Paffenbarger, Gibbons & Macera, 2005).

Apart from physical health benefits, other social, academic and psychological benefits have also been associated with participation in physical activity for children. Such benefits include an association between participation in physical activity and better mental health (Zubrick et al., 1995), improved global self-esteem (Sherill et al., 1989; Strauss, et al., 2001), and improved school performance, including increased academic performance, concentration and behaviour (Dywer, et al., 1983; Dywer et al., 1983; Shepard, 1997; Trembly, Inman & Willms, 2000), and social benefits including increased social status (Chase & Drummer, 1992; Dunn, Dunn, & Bayduza, 2007; see Weiss & Stuntz, 2004, for a review).

However, it should be noted that not all researchers have found consistent and robust associations between these factors. For example, some researchers have found decreased self-esteem in young women (between 16 and 21 years) with increasing participation in physical activity (Tiggemann & Williamson, 2000).

Effects/Impact of Insufficient Physical Activity

Despite the obvious personal and societal benefits of participating in sufficient physical activity, many adults and young people are not sufficiently physically active. The cost to wider society of insufficient participation in physical activity is reflected within health care budgets and statistics showing the prevalence and high economic cost of mortality and morbidity associated with sedentary lifestyles (AIHW, 2000; Stephenson et al., 2000).

Insufficient physical activity is associated with increased all-cause mortality and increased morbidity. It is among the leading contributors to illness and impacts on disability-adjusted life years (DALY) and burden of disease (BOD) (Anderson, Schnohr, Schroll, & Hein, 2000; Bauman et al., 2002; Mathers, Vos, & Stevenson, 1999; Villeneuve, Morrison, Craig & Schaubel, 1998). Physical inactivity has been

found to be the second largest overall contributor to burden of disease and the highest rank contributor for women in Australia (Mathers et al., 1999). In particular, insufficient exercise is implicated as a risk factor contributing to cardiovascular disease, various cancers, diabetes and other types of injury (Buckksch, 2005; US Health & Human Services, 1996).

For children and adolescents inadequate or low levels of physical activity has been associated specifically with increased risk of high blood pressure, excess weight and obesity, Type 2 diabetes and atherosclerosis (Baranowski et al., 1992; Booth et al., 2003; Freedman, Srinivasan, Valdez, Williams, & Berenson, 1997). Other risk factors such as smoking and alcohol intake may also be associated with inadequate physical inactivity in adolescents (Raitkari et al., 1995).

Initiatives to Increase Physical Activity

Increasing physical activity is a national health priority in Australia (Bauman et al., 2002). Attempts to increase Australians' participation in physical activity have occurred through public health campaigns such as 'The Active Australia Initiative'. Initiatives such as this have met with limited success (Armstrong, Bauman & Davies, 2000). Similar findings have been demonstrated overseas. For example, in the United Kingdom one study found that the proportion of insufficiently active adolescent girls remained constant between 1992 and 2003 despite many initiatives designed to increase participation (Balding, 2004).

In the U.S.A. Timperio et al., (2004) recently examined the effectiveness of various strategies to increase physical activity in children, adolescents and young adults by reviewing 28 studies conducted between 1999 and 2003. Despite varied and wide ranging approaches, many of the intervention strategies were of limited success. Out of ten studies targeting children in out-of-school or combined settings, only three

reported significant increases in physical activity. Of the nine studies targeting physical activity in schools, only four reported significant increases in physical activity for some of their participants. In adolescents, only two of five studies reported significant increases in physical activity (see Timperio, Salmon & Ball, 2004 for this review). The only Australian study conducted during this time period revealed a significant increase in vigorous physical activity (van Beurden, Barnett, Zask, Dietrich, Brooks, Beard et al., 2003; Zask, van Beurden, Barnett, Brooks, & Dietrich, 2001).

While some studies reported significant increases in physical activity, they failed to report this in the context of recommended levels. Failure to set this context limits interpretation of these results as it is possible that some increases could have occurred for participants, and while it was statistically significant, it may still have fallen short of recommended physical activity levels. Alternatively, some increases may have occurred for participants already sufficiently physically active, offering few further health benefits.

Gendered Barriers to Participation in Physical Activity

Studies that have included young people of both genders have found that young people's barriers to participating in physical activity are different to that of adults (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2000; Sport England, 2002). However, many studies examining barriers to participation in physical activity have focused on the experiences of girls because of their consistently statistically lower rates of participation in physical activity. In examining physical activity levels from a gendered perspective, several studies have considered the specific experiences of girls and the variety of barriers facing them in regards to participation in physical activity.

These studies have identified complex and interconnected factors impacting on girl's participation in physical activity. Overall, girls are less able to perceive that the benefits of physical activity are greater than the negatives/barriers and they report more barriers to participation than boys (Garcia, Norton Broda, Frenn, Coviak, Pender, & Ronis, 1995; Pender, Murdaugh, & Parsons, 2002). For ease of reporting, the barriers have been broken into several groupings, reflecting the core issues; however, a significant amount of overlap exists. Some of the barriers and issues identified by girls as impacting on their participation in physical activity include issues about facilities and services offered, lack of accessibility, inconvenience, unsuitable weather, current services not meeting girls needs and lack of suitable venues and facilities (Biddle, Coalter, O'Donovan, MacBeth, Nevill, & Whitehead, 2005; Cox, Coleman, & Roker, 2005; Foster et al., 2005; Kientzler, 1999; Leslie et al., 1999; Robbins, Pender, Kazanis, 2003; Tappe, Duda & Ehrnwald, 1990; Taylor, Blair, Cummings, Wun, Malina, 1999).

Other barriers to participation in physical activity for girls reflected issues related to self consciousness in the context of physical activity such as: (a) privacy in change rooms; (b) self-consciousness about looks when exercising; (c) self-consciousness when exercising in front of boys and (d) discomfort and embarrassment due to PE uniforms. Further barriers reflected conflicting priorities. Responses in this category included: (a) wanting to do other things with their time/conflict with other activities; (b) being too busy; (c) demands of schoolwork and (d) life style changes e.g., transition from high school to work (Biddle et al., 2005; Cox et al., 2005; Forster, Hillsdon, Cavill, Allender & Cowburn, 2005; Kientzler, 1999; Leslie et al., 1999;

Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency, 2000; Robbins, Pender & Kazanis, 2003; Sports England, 2002; Tappe et al., 1990; Taylor et al., 1999; Vu, Murrie, Gonzalez, & Jobe, 2006).

Girl's perceptions of and attitudes to physical activity as well as their perceptions of the beliefs and behaviours of others also constituted important barriers to participation in physical activity. Identified barriers in this category included: (a) perceived lack of support from teachers; (b) dominance of boys in PE classes; (c) perceptions that boys received preferential treatment; (d) fear of being hurt during sports due to falls, being kicked, hit etc.; (e) lack of encouragement; (f) lack of motivation; (g) sport or exercise viewed as boring or too tiring; (h) lack of people to exercise with; (i) avoidance of sweating; (j) avoidance of messing up make-up and hair; (k) sport being too competitive; (l) sport being viewed as a 'boy thing' and inappropriate for girls; (m) keeping fit, healthy or being good at sports not identified as being important and (n) sport viewed as not a 'cool' activity for girls despite a recognition of the benefits of participation.

Another approach to examining girls' barriers to participation has been to interview girls who 'always', 'sometimes' and 'never' participate in physical activity and explore aspects of their experiences. Cox, Coleman and Roker (2005) found that young women who regularly engaged in physical activity often had long and positive histories of participation in physical activity. These girls cited health benefits, encouragement from school and family and social advantages as their main motivations for regular participation. Educational transition times were identified as potential periods for drop out. While these girls recognised the link between exercise, weight and appearance, few identified this as a motivation for participation and they rarely felt self conscious when exercising (Cox et al., 2005).

Girls who 'sometimes' participated in physical activity reported mixed histories of early participation and feelings of self-consciousness when exercising. The barriers to participation identified by these girls included lack of facilities, life style changes, lack of time and energy. The desire to feel healthy and "compensate for poor eating habits" was cited as a possible motivator and included the desire to lose weight and improve their physique. There were also comments that alluded to the role of identity with some participants citing that sport was not a 'cool' activity for girls despite recognition of the benefits of participation. These participants reported enjoying the fun and social elements of participation (Cox et al., 2005, *p.5*).

Young women who 'never' participated also reported positive memories of earlier sporting participation but found the transition time to high school was associated with decreases in compulsory participation and enjoyment and playground changes. Participants in this group reported 'disliking sport' in general, feeling intimidated and self conscious when participating, and disliking competition. Many also reported feeling anxious about their appearance. These participants were not unaware of the benefits of participation in physical activity yet had other activities, mostly of a social or educational nature, that took priority. They also reported inactive peer groups. In addition, some of these participants indicated that to be involved in sport one needed to 'look the part' and already be somewhat fit and healthy (Cox et al., 2005). Others reported a clash of projected image between the sporty image and their other preferred images e.g., fan of alternative music. These girls did not consider themselves the sporty type and had alternative images that conflicted with the inclusion of physical activity.

Therefore, while there are many important factors impacting on participation, most of the environmentally driven explanations such as lack of resources, time or access to facilities, fail to sufficiently account for the influence of broader, more complex social and gender issues. According to Choi (2000), gender issues may be deeply ingrained into individuals and systems on multiple levels from an early age. Many girls may not participate in sufficient physical activity because of what sport and participation means to them and how it contributes to their gendered identity (Choi, 2000). These gender issues may be particularly pertinent for girls as participation in physical activity doesn't fit easily into current concepts of femininity (Choi, 2000; Cockburn & Clarke, 2002).

The same may also be true for men who did not believe that they fit the male 'sporty-type' and choose other masculine identities. There is confirmation of this in the findings of the Forster et al (2005) and the English National Fitness Survey (Sports Council & Health Education Authority, 1992) which found that 38% of women and 24% of men claimed that not being the 'sporty type' put them off participating in physical activity. Drummond (2003) found that boys who conclude that they are not the 'sporty type' often experience negative perceptions of their bodies and abilities.

Barriers to boys participating in physical activity have not been studied as extensively as for girls in the psychological literature. Yet boys also show significant decreases in participation levels around 11 to 12 years of age. Messner (1988, 1994, 1995, 1998, 2002) and Sabo (1985) have written extensively about the meaning and experience of sport and physical activity to boys and its contribution to a masculine identity. The finding that sport and physical activity are central to the development of a masculine identity raises the issue of why boys are not participating enough in

physical activity. Some answers may be found in the qualitative research into the experiences of boys who do not meet societal expectations that they excel at sports. These boys can experience reduced self-esteem, teasing from others, and feel less positively about their bodies overall (Drummond, 2003; Gard & Meyenn, 2000; Swain, 2000). In addition, although identification with masculinity is often gained through participation in physical activity for boys, there are also many negative side effects such as participation in violence, aggression and winning at all costs (Messner, 2002). It is possible that increases in sedentary behaviours such as watching television and playing computer games may reflect young peoples', particularly boy's, choice of an alternative identity to that of the 'sporty type'. However, factors impacting on participation rates and barriers to participation in physical activity for young men and boys have gone largely unexamined and require further research.

Schmalz and Kerstetter (2006) argue that when faced with a potentially stigmatizing characteristic, individuals may chose to behave in one of two ways. The first is to continue to participate and develop coping mechanisms to deal with the stigma. The second is to not participate, thus avoiding or 'disidentifying' the stigma. It is suggested that this is what happens to many girls and some boys with regards to participation in organised sport.

Summary

There are a myriad of complex issues impacting on young people's participation in physical activity. The issue of insufficient physical activity is particularly pertinent to girls due to the higher rates of attrition across early to late adolescence. The focus on girls has most likely contributed to the relative neglect of issues impacting on boy's and men's participation in physical activity. Gender based explanations are complex and difficult to quantify. What gender based explanations

suggest is that interventions based on lack of knowledge (individual factors), improving physical accessibility to facilities (environmental factors) or those interventions aimed at increasing participation by involving parents and peers (social factors) are unlikely to be totally successful as a result of their failure to recognize gender based beliefs and structures as being central to inadequate participation. From a gender based perspective, interventions need also to address the systems and structures that reinforce these socially constructed notions of sport and physical activity, many of which will be examined in the following chapters.

In this thesis, the researcher is interested in gendered experiences, particularly how social constructions of gender pertaining to femininity and masculinity impact on boys' and girls' views of their bodies, and subsequently on their participation in physical activity. The thesis will directly and indirectly explore the idea that some girls and boys come to believe that they are 'not the sporty type'. Other issues are also raised. These include when decisions are made about being the sporty type, the degree of flexibility in such labels, the other types of labels that exist and how girls and boys negotiate these experiences at different ages. To consider these issues a better understanding of how masculinity and femininity develop in young people is required. This will be addressed in the next section.

Gender - Understanding Masculinity and Femininity

If gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. Moreover, one does not "do" one's gender alone. One is always "doing" with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary (Butler, 2004, p.1).

Overview

Cognitive and developmental psychological perspectives offer some insight into the development of gender based differences in physical ability and movement in young people. These perspectives acknowledge broader cultural and social contexts, but offer little understanding of the mechanisms or experiences of such influences. However, other social constructivist, cultural studies and feminist frameworks do not presume male and female, masculinity and femininity, to be unaffected by broader influences, but allege that they are socially constructed entities with culturally preferred forms. These culturally preferred and dominant forms of masculinity and femininity are thought to convey and reinforce important societal hierarchies such as male superiority over females as well as demonstrating the ways in which women and men should behave and physically present themselves. While this thesis acknowledges the contributions of studies from the former perspective, it is more strongly aligned with the latter.

Socialisation is one way of explaining how girls and boys come to learn what it means to be 'feminine' and 'masculine' within a given society. The socialisation of boys and girls is immensely complex, impacting on individuals, their interactions with others, and society at multiple levels (socially, economically, emotionally, politically

etc.) often simultaneously. While earlier writings positioned individuals as passive, inert, biological entities in this process, more recent constructivist and feminist perspectives argue that while some influences may occur at the subconscious level, individuals may also actively engage in strategies of resistance, compliance and challenge in regards to gender. Some go so far as to suggest that gender is an interactive performance rather than an unchanging static entity determined by one's biological sex. These gendered performances have been explored in the lives of female athletes but as yet, such theories have not been examined in the lives of young people. Each of these arguments and subsequent theoretic underpinnings will be discussed further within the context of this section.

Cognitive and Developmental Theories of Gender Development

Ideas about masculinity and femininity, the behaviours associated with them and how they evolve have been long debated. Many earlier proponents sought to explain these differences as real and natural, based in biology. Similarly, cognitive and developmental theories of gender development provide an uncritical individualistic description of gender development and the adoption of gender appropriate behaviours throughout childhood and into adulthood. Cognitive and developmental theorists suggest that children have differing concepts of 'gender', dependent upon their emerging cognitive capacities. There are several key developmental periods that occur for young people; however, this thesis is primarily concerned with those described as late childhood, early and later adolescence.

According to cognitive and developmental theorists, children up to seven years are learning about the constancy of their biological sex and attempting to conform to gender stereotypes they believe are consistent with this (Kolberg, 1966). Between eight and 11 years girls become more flexible in their interpretation of gender

stereotypes and expectations, for example, participating in a large range of sports and other activities that may be determined to be gender inappropriate for older girls. In general, society accepts this (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Dorney, 1995). Girls within this age range are often perceived as being strong, confident and outspoken – ‘tomboys’. Boys, however, do not experience an equivalent period of flexibility. Their behaviour typically continues to conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity.

At the beginning of adolescence (approximately 11 years) ‘gender intensification’ occurs and young people again adopt more rigid beliefs about gender roles (Hill & Lynch, 1983; Richards & Larson, 1989). Gender intensification occurs as young people become more aware of their developing bodies and as physical attractiveness becomes increasingly important. Societal expectations of gender specific and appropriate behaviours also increase at this time. Writers acknowledge broader societal influences, but without exploring them in detail. They suggest that although biological changes play an important role in this development and in young people’s shifting attitudes and beliefs, it is the social factors that have the greatest effect (Alfieri, Ruble, & Higgins, 1996). It is also suggested that while girls are increasingly inflexible in their gender role expectations and beliefs during this early adolescent period, they are still more flexible than young males.

A variety of factors influence later adolescents including decisions about career and romantic relationships and gender identity again becomes relatively more flexible. This trend continues into adulthood (Levinson, 1978; Mitchell & Helson, 1990).

In summary, cognitive and developmental theorists would suggest that during early adolescence gender identity, beliefs and attitudes are more rigid. Conversely, late childhood is seen as a time when, at least for girls, gender based expectations and beliefs are more flexible. This context makes late childhood an especially interesting

time in which to consider children's experiences and concepts of physicality, particularly in relation to gender and physical activity. Similarly, later adolescence is again a significant developmental period when gender expectations are relatively less important compared to the preceding stage.

Developmental and cognitive theorists offer descriptions rather than explanations for gender based observations. While acknowledging that outside social forces act on young people, they do not provide any real explanation for the forces and their impacts. They also provide little understanding of the variable ways in which young people may respond to these external pressures. The uncritical and descriptive nature of these theories also provides a sense that developmental processes are real and natural, based fundamentally on emerging physical and cognitive abilities. More comprehensive explorations of gender issues and the development of concepts of masculinity and femininity are needed. They are offered by social constructivist, cultural studies and feminist perspectives which view gender as complex social constructions with varying amounts of personal agency.

Masculinity and Femininity as a Social Construction

More recent explanations for gender differences proposed by authors such as Connell (e.g., 2000), Messner (e.g., 2002), and Choi (2000) have drawn on diverse theoretical foundations, such as social constructivist, cultural studies and critical feminist influences, to provide more comprehensive explanations for behaviour. These viewpoints recognize that through socialization processes girls and boys learn what it is to be masculine or feminine in a particular society. They further suggest that socialisation helps to explain how masculinities and femininities are constructed (Hargreaves, 1994). Such theorists purport that the presentation of gender as a

dichotomy with masculinity at one end and femininity at the other is an important organising principal used in sustaining the dominant gender order, that is, male superiority over females (Connell, 2000).

Structural Mechanisms of Socialisation

Children repeatedly learn from a young age to match their behaviours to their sex (Hargreaves, 1994, p.4). While some of this is taught through parental influences, large scale organizations such as educational systems, the media and sporting organizations also play a central role in defining and reinforcing appropriate gendered behaviours (Connell, 2000, p.11).

The media is thought to be a powerful mechanism that reinforces and constructs gender stereotypes and makes the differences between men's and women's abilities appear natural and real (Choi, 2000; Connell, 2000). For example, the print and electronic media's prolific portrayal of male athleticism using active displays of strength and skill contrasts strongly with its images of women in passive shots accompanied by text that highlights heterosexual availability and/or family friendly values (Choi, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994; Messner, 2002; Tuttle, 1988).

Aside from the media, one of the other key institutions implicated in the process of socialisation is the school. Historically schools were designed to create and reinforce specific modes of masculinity (e.g., Connell, 2000). Although no longer explicitly aimed at producing particular forms of masculinity, contemporary schooling continues to highlight differences between girls and boys through various gendering practices. Examples include curriculum content, academic streaming, labour specialisation of teachers and more subtle practices such as the use of uniforms etc.

These all serve to create and reflect gender divisions as well as contributing to the creation of varying forms of masculinity and femininity (Connell, 2000, p.154; Connell, Ashenden, Kesler & Dowsett, 1982).

Organised sport is also thought to have a powerful role in the socialisation of boys and girls. It is the relationship of sport to the construction of gender that will be the focus of the next section. Authors such as Connell (1995, 2000) challenge the notion that gender differences are located inherently within the biology of individuals of different physiological sexes. They argue that expressions of masculinity and femininity are seen as social constructions, reflected, shaped, reinforced and challenged in individuals, groups and the large scale organizations previously identified. Resulting representations of femininity and masculinity are not static but rather change historically, and according to specific economic, ideological, political and social conditions. Such constructions ultimately serve the dominant gender order.

Within this view there is no singular, universal representation of masculinity and the same may be argued for femininity. Rather, there are always multiple 'masculinities' available, not only across cultures but within cultures and subcultures, and these are being constantly challenged, subverted and/or conformed to (Connell, 1995, 2000).

Hegemonic Representations of Gender

Although multiple representations of masculinity and femininity may be present in a given culture not all representations are considered equal. Hegemonic masculinity or femininity is recognized as being the culturally exalted or idealised representation of that gender rather than the most common form (Connell, 2000; Choi, 2000; Krane, 2001; Lenskyj, 1994). Although Connell (1987) would use the term 'emphasized' femininity rather than hegemonic femininity, due to his view that the

masculine form is always seen as superior to the female in patriarchal societies, other authors such as Choi (2000) and Krane (2001) use the term hegemonic for both males and females. In line with these more recent feminist writings this thesis adopts the term 'hegemonic femininity' while recognising Connell's point that hegemonic femininity is not viewed as superior or equal to hegemonic masculinity within wider society.

Men

Some decades ago, Goffman (1963) argued that White, middle class, heterosexuality was the culturally preferred representation of masculinity. More recent writings identify hegemonic masculinity as also embodied within an athletic looking, mesomorphic, V-shaped body with a developed and muscular chest and arms, wide shoulders and narrow waist (Mishkind et al., 1986). Media representations of the ideal male body are often eroticized, naked or semi-naked and can be either muscular or 'waif-like' (Gill et al., 2000; Grogan, 1999). Desired behavioural characteristics found in the hegemonic male include athleticism, strength, aggressiveness, and competitiveness (Bryson, 1983; Cahn, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994; Wearing, 1996).

Women

For much of the Western world hegemonic femininity, and more recently masculinity has become increasingly associated with physical attractiveness or beauty (Bordo, 1990; Brumberg, 1997; Brace-Gaven, 2002). The ideal woman is now thin, firm and well toned (Brumberg, 1997; Choi, 2000). However she must not be 'too' muscular or she runs the risk being too closely associated with masculinity (Bordo,

1990; Choi, 2000; Krane, 2001). In addition to the appearance based traits, desirable behavioural characteristics for women include the need to be warm, kind, sensitive, patient, cheerful, flirtatious, interested in children etc. (Prentice & Carranza, 2002).

Agency in Gender

Theories about the social construction of gender are inadequate in their ability to account for personal agency or the fluidity of gender representations across time and culture (Connell, 1995, 2000). Gender identity is not a concrete quality possessed by individuals. Rather, it is both fluid and changeable, developing within the individual and as a result of interaction with the social world. Experiences of conformity, resistance, subversion and crisis by individuals, sometimes simultaneously, are the norm (Connell, 1995, 2000; Kimmel & Messner, 2004; Messner, 2002). Individuals, therefore, may be active participants in the construction of their gendered identity, although some influences may still occur subconsciously. Feminist, social constructivist authors such as Butler (1990) and Lorber (2010) argue that not only is gender constructed, but it is performed with agency.

Performative Gender

Proponents of performative gender take the notion of agency further claiming that gender is both 'done' and 'performed' (Butler, 1990, 1993; Connell, 1987, 1995; Messner, 2002; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Young, 1980). A key proponent of this, Butler (1990) suggests that gender is a social construction constituted through infinitely repeated behavioural acts such as postures, gestures, and bodily movements, in addition to external presentations such as physical appearances, musculature etc. According to Butler, (1990) "the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and

without those acts, there would be no gender at all" (p.140). It is through these repeated performances that differences between the sexes begin to appear natural and rooted in the physical body.

Usser (1997) provides a specific feminist account of performative gender in relation to women and femininity. Like other theorists, she highlights the intimate links between such performances and women's historical, social and cultural location. However, she also stresses the active engagement of women in various, often contradictory 'scripts' of femininity, stating,

we are critical readers and viewers, actively negotiating and resisting the various representations of 'woman' which pervade our daily lives. We continuously sift and select from the different scripts offered, creating and re-creating the story that is femininity (Usser, 1997, p.10).

While acknowledging that hers is only one possible account, Usser (1997) describes a number of 'scripts' that women can adopt in regards to negotiating femininity. She asserts that women can move flexibly between scripts in different contexts and that they may engage with more than one script simultaneously. In adopting any given position women are constantly negotiating the contradictions between the models of femininity on offer and what they want to be. Despite this, it is not always possible for either women or observers to clearly identify the particular performance taking place.

Usser (1997) offers four different positions or performances that women may take with regards to femininity; 'being girl', 'doing girl', 'rejecting girl' and 'subverting girl' (p.355). In 'being girl' women attempt to "be rather than merely do femininity" and this involves full engagement with the beliefs and actions associated with hegemonic femininity such as notions of romantic love, the role of women in relation to men and the importance of having an attractive physical appearance (Usser,

1997, *p.*356). In 'doing girl' women may give the appearance of 'being girl', however, this is recognised as a choice or as a role that is adopted in order to suit or benefit the women. In this role women may behave in ways that appear to conform to notions of hegemonic femininity, for example in relationship to men or concerning physical appearance. Women recognise this as a role they perform. However, they may also experience disappointment when they did not achieve the performance they desire, particularly regarding to physical appearance (Usser, 1997). Taking the position of 'being girl' may also result in women appearing differently in various contexts according to their needs and desires and may be experienced as one of the many contradictions that woman negotiate in performing femininity.

'Resisting girl' occurs when women 'ignore or deny' the precepts of hegemonic femininity, particularly as they relate to heterosexual relationships and physical presentations of the body. "It is the position of women whose sense of herself as a "woman" doesn't simply come from her appearance, the shape of her body or her ability to attract a man" (Usser, 1997, *p.*364). This is not to say that women adopting these positions may not engage in behaviours aimed at improving their physical appearance or be interested in attracting a relationship; but their behaviours are directed at pleasing themselves as opposed to pleasing others, in particular, men. To adopt such a position women risk condemnation both from other women and men.

In 'subverting girl' women actively "play with gender as a performance, twisting, imitating and parodying traditional scripts of femininity or indeed masculinity in a very public and polished display" (Usser, 1997, *p.*366). Examples of subverting girl are seen most clearly in the performances of drag queens or kings. While women are able to make some choices in the performances they choose, Bordo

(1993) and Butler (1990) emphasise that there are negative repercussions for women who chose not to perform hegemonic femininity. It is argued that this reduces their true freedom of choice.

As yet, performative gender using the framework of Usser (1997) has not been developed or directly applied to males' embodiments of masculinity. It would be conceivable that there would be multiple performances available to men. However, patriarchal dominance found in most Western societies would strongly favour some performances over others. Performances of resistance would be expected to be rarer than for girls as it would mean giving up higher status in the current gender order. The qualitative studies of Davison (2000) and Wellard (2006) provide some support for this prediction. These studies have examined the lived experiences and negotiations of boys and men in physical activity. Applying the performative gender framework of Usser (1997) to these studies it is possible to see examples of what might be considered 'doing boy' and 'resisting boy' in participants descriptions and actions.

Summary

This thesis will make use of multiple frameworks regarding gender in order to understand children and young people's experiences of their physical bodies including in the context of physical activity. Cognitive and developmental frameworks will be used predominately within the first study to explore gender and age differences in physical self-concept, self-objectification, physical activity etc., and these frameworks are particularly relevant when using a strongly quantitative methodology. However, social constructivist, feminist and cultural studies perspectives will also be employed to frame the understanding and interpretation of the results as it pertains to gender. The latter frameworks for understanding gender will also be used particularly for study two which employs a more creative qualitative approach. The use of multiple

frameworks, while complex, has the ability to generate a broader understanding of participants' experiences. However, it may also generate explanations that at times seem contradictory; however, this is not problematic so long as the particular framework being used is clearly identified.

When gender is no longer viewed as real or natural, but rather as a series of socially constructed performances, the physical body becomes an important site of enactment and embodiment, something of central interest in this thesis. Theories of performative gender have provided a useful framework for examining and understanding the experiences of women. As yet the framework of performative gender as specifically proposed by Usser (1997) has not been used to explore the lives and experiences of young people, boys or girls. It is likely to be a useful framework when exploring young people's developmentally unique physical experiences. Such a framework can also include examination of gendered performance and sites of resistance and compliance to gendered norms.

Within the social construction of gender, the body is an important site in maintaining the distinctions between men and women (Reischer & Koo, 2004). Concepts of masculinity and femininity impact on the individual's views/beliefs of gender appropriate behaviours including those that occur in the context of participation in physical activity (Coakley, 1990, *p.*192 – 197). Therefore, organised sport and physical activity play a pertinent role in the construction of gender, intersecting with body related issues which will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Sport, Physical Activity and the Construction of Gender

Sport is named as a male institution, not just in the numerical sense that many have pointed to but, more importantly, in the values and behavioural norms it promotes and ultimately naturalises, both on the field and in organisational hierarchies" (Whitson, 1990, p.20).

Overview

Although often portrayed as a "heroic malady that magically transcends concerns with work, power and inequality" in the Australian context, organized sport is a collection of organisations, associations, businesses and institutions that reflect and reproduce dominant gender beliefs and relationships (Rowe, 1991, p.4; Bryson, 1994; Whitson, 1990). In White, westernized countries this means establishing and maintaining male superiority over subordinate forms of masculinity and females (Messner, 2002). This dominance is achieved by exalting those physical activities and sports performed by men and associated with hegemonic masculinity, naturalizing and highlighting differences between women and men in terms of physiology and performance, and denigrating and/or ignoring those qualities associated with woman and femininity. Particular socializing institutions such as schools and the media play important roles in perpetuating these dominant cultural patterns (Hargreaves, 1994; McKay, 1992).

However, challenges and contradictions to dominate notions of what is gender appropriate in physical activity occur. For example, women and girls are increasingly participating in organised sports previously considered masculine. These include soccer, cricket, rugby and Australian rules football etc. The resistance of boys is less obvious and can be found in alternative versions of masculinity, such as skateboarding which still remains superior to femininity and other forms masculinity. Furthermore,

not all physical activity occurs within the context of mainstream, organised sport. Resistance to traditional notions of physical activity and sport participation is not limited to individuals. It also occurs at the level of physical activity movements which will be discussed in the context of this chapter.

Organised Sport as a Gendering Institution

Within contemporary society, Darlison (1985) argues, “the sport world represents that last bastion of a separate and identifiable male world. In a world where physical strength is no longer necessary for daily living, sport has taken on an important symbolic significance” (p.250). Messner (2002) believes that “the institution of sport historically constructs hegemonic masculinity as bodily superiority over femininity and over non-athletic masculinities” (p.20). He claims that “one reason that sport is such a resonant symbol of hegemonic masculinity is that it literally *embodies* the seemingly natural superiority of men over women” (Messner cited in Rowe & McKay, 1998, p.118). As such it has been long recognised that that organised sport is a gendering institution (Magdalinski, 2009; McKay, 1991; Messner & Sabo, 1990).

The organised ‘sporting’ arena reflects and reinforces dominant ideologies found in other institutions such as the media and schools and plays an important role in maintaining the established gender order (Bryson, 1994, p.48; McKay, 1992; Whitson, 1990). Organised sport is thought to teach and exalt behaviours, skills and attitudes such as violence, assertiveness, confidence, competition, individualism, heterosexuality, aggression and the subordination of women (Bryson, 1994; McKay, 1992). These attributes are ‘taught’ to men and boys through organised sport and are

then generalised to wider society (Whitson, 1990; Messner, 2002). As a result, mainstream organised sports are more compatible with hegemonic masculinity than hegemonic femininity.

Schooling

Research from cultural studies, feminist and social constructivist frameworks have highlighted that although gender differences in sport and physical activity may occur earlier differences often become evident in the school setting (e.g., Messner, 2002). Despite review and reforms of school based physical education programs, especially in the U.S.A. under Title IX, gender segregation and divisions often first appear and then remain intact in the school setting (Hargreaves, 1994; Scranton, 1986, 1992). Primary aged children come to expect and accept sex-linked attitudes and abilities and sex segregation (Hargreaves, 1994, *p.8*). With increasing age, children's experiences of sport become firmly gender based and this is reflected in the number and types of sports that young males and females participate in (Hargreaves, 1994). Likewise teachers have stereotyped notions of sporting ability based on gender notions (Hargreaves, 1994, *p.10*). A combination of these forces within the school setting has the effect of signalling that sport is a male domain.

A number of more contemporary studies have also explored the role of schools, and particularly the role of physical education and its contribution to the construction of gender (e.g., Azzarito & Solmon, 2009; Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006; Penney, 2002; Verscheure & Amade-Escot, 2007). These studies highlight that structure and practice of physical education in schools continues to overtly and inadvertently reinforce many dominant discourses regarding gender, largely disadvantaging girls, but also boys who do not conform to dominant notions of masculinity.

The Media

Representations of sport in the media also contribute to gender socialization. Several authors using feminist, social constructivist, and cultural studies theoretical frameworks have provided examples of ways in which women's skills and participation in sport are minimized, trivialized, sexualised or ignored (Boyle & McKay, 1995; Bryson, 1994). For example, implicit and explicit media representations of women athletes tend to focus on appearance as opposed to performance, and emphasize obvious markers of hegemonic femininity such as physical attractiveness and heterosexual availability (Bryson, 1994; Daddario, 1994; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). To the contrary, men's sports receive greater media coverage, funding and support, and representations focus on performance. Sabo and Jansen (1992) refer to these dual representations as 'symbolic annihilation' and 'symbolic glorification'. Such images reinforce the notion that men's sporting prowess is based on functionality and what they 'do' whereas women's prowess is obtained through production of an attractive sexualized physical appearance (Kane, 1995; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Messner, Duncan & Wachs, 1996; Rowe & Lawrence, 1990).

An examination of the career of Australian surfer Lane Beachley provides insights into the gender differences that occur in the treatment of male and female professional athletes. Lane won seven world championships and more consecutive world titles than any other surfer, male or female, but won less prize money than her male counterparts performing at a similar level. Furthermore, Beachley notes that many women surfers are not used to endorse female surfing products such as board

shorts and bikini's. Manufacturers employ models for this, to maximize sex appeal. Conversely, male surfers are frequently used to endorse surfing product (Higgins, 2007).

Not only are men more frequently represented as participants in organised sports and in the media, but they continue to be over represented in the upper echelons of sport's coaching, administration and sports journalism, for example, in the Olympic movement and even in elite women's sports (McKay, 1997). As such, organized sport is not only gendered in itself but also actively participates in the reproduction of gender (Kimmel & Messner, 2004).

From constructivist and feminist viewpoints the sporting arena has been used to promote differences in men's and women's performances as real and natural, failing to accurately represent historical, economic and social influences which have hampered women's performances and participation. Differences in performance are then used as evidence of inherent male superiority, not only in sport, but in wider society (Choi, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994, *p.1*). The extensive role of various media's (e.g., TV, print, radio) in constructing and reinforcing dominant societal discourses about gender can be found in the comprehensive edited works of Markula (2009), Hundley and Billings (2010) and Nyland (2007). For example, Markula (2009) invites various authors to examine contemporary sporting events such as the Olympics and how disproportionate media attention is provided to women participating in "feminine" events and how the focus is often on the appearance qualities of women athletes rather than the skills they demonstrate. This body of work also highlights the fact while the amount of media coverage devoted to women

athletes may be increasing numerically, this may not necessarily reflect an overall change in the more subtle treatment of women athletes or the perceptions promoted about them.

Organised Sport and Masculinity

Trujillo (1991) comments that “perhaps no single institution in American culture has influenced our sense of masculinity more than sport” (p.292). Similar arguments can be applied to Australian men (McKay, 1997; Rowe & McKay, 1998). Based on earlier works (such as Eitzen, 1975 and Sabo, 1985), Messner (2004), states that “all boys are, to a greater or lesser extent, judged according to their ability, or lack of ability, in competitive sports” (p.111). However, according to Messner (2004) boys not only have to participate in sport but they have to be successful, ‘winners’ in the competitive aspect of participation. Boys who cannot live up to hegemonic ideals of masculinity through participation in sport may be marginalized and subsequently have both their masculinity and heterosexuality questioned by other boys, men and by women (McKay, 1992). Studies have demonstrated that both boys and girls believe that it is more important for boys to be good at sport than girls (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, & Blumenfeld, 1993; Fredricks & Eccles, 2002; Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles, & Wigfield, 2002). The sporting male is almost synonymous with hegemonic masculinity in the Australian context. Qualities of toughness, strength, physical attractiveness, muscularity, heterosexual virulence, skill and aggressiveness are highly valued (Connell, 2000; Griffin, 1998; Rowe & McKay, 1998).

Many sports have been classified as masculine or feminine depending on the skills they require and the values they convey. Sports considered masculine are likely to contain elements of danger, violence, speed, risk, strength, endurance, challenge,

courage, aggression and team spirit (Koivula, 2001; Metheny, 1965). Related to this, certain body types, appearances and performances are exalted over others. According to Bryson, (1994) sports such as cricket and football (rugby league and union) contribute to male hegemony in the Australian context more than other sports.

Socialising experiences at home and in the broader sporting context also reinforce the importance of sport in men's lives even to non-participants (Hargreaves, 1994, *p.5*). According to Messner, (2002) "the televised sports manhood formula provides a remarkably stable and concrete view of masculinity as grounded in bravery, risk taking, violence, bodily strength, and heterosexuality" (*p.126*). The televised sports manhood formula employed by the media produces a steady stream of images that target certain marketable and consumable products which are strongly associated with masculinity, e.g., clothing, cars, etc. These images often denigrate other forms of masculinity and femininity. The desired qualities of masculinity can therefore be achieved not only through successful participation in the activities themselves, but also vicariously through engagement with sports in the media where spectators are united symbolically, abstractly and generically with other men as they identify with the players (Bryson, 1994) or through the purchasing of associated products (Messner, 2002).

Benefits of Sporting Participation to Boys

Not only does participation in sport provide many of the health benefits previously discussed, for boys, being good at sports can also result in increased popularity, status and self-esteem (Chase & Dummer, 1992; Goldberg & Chandler, 1989; Daniels & Leaper, 2006). For men who are successful in sport there is also great financial success to be obtained. Successful male sporting figures can expect to make millions of dollars through prize money and endorsements and overall male

sportsmen continue to receive more prize money and endorsements of greater value than sports women (Kobritz, 2008; Women's Sport Foundation, 2008a). At the college level in the U.S.A., sporting excellence may also provide financial assistance and admission into educational institutions. Greater numbers of sport scholarships, of greater value, are available to men than are to women (Women's Sports Foundation, 2008b). For the rare few, male success in sport may also be rewarded with international fame, accolades and admiration (Dworkin & Messner, 2002).

At an individual level, Hargreaves, (1994) argues that "the acquisition of strength, muscularity and athletic skill has always been empowering for men" (p.2). However, there is also some evidence that 'sporting identity' may also serve as a protective factor for some adolescent boys against other health risks. For example, a study by Plumridge and colleagues (2002) indicated that self identification as a sporting person provided some boys with an alternative route to 'coolness' which might otherwise be obtained through smoking. This association was not available to the adolescent girls in the same study, for which all other identities were considered inferior to 'coolness' obtained through smoking (Plumridge, Fitzgerald, & Able, 2002).

The Cost of Sports' Participation to Men

According to Messner (2002) the promotion of hegemonic masculinity in sport comes at a cost to men. This cost is evidenced in their poor relationships and their inability to connect with women as seen in the rates of violence and sexual harm towards women. It is further seen in their suppression of empathy; in their relationships with other men who come to be defined through cultures of silence; in the normalisation of violence; in attitudes of invulnerability, fearlessness; and in positive attitudes to drinking and fighting. In addition, this cost may be born out in the

violence they inflict on other men and also on their own bodies through playing when injured and viewing their bodies as machines or weapons resulting in long term injuries and poor health (Messner, 2002; Sabo, 1994; White, Young & McTeer, 1995). Messner and Sabo (1994) provide an example of some U.S.A. athletes who have an 11 year shorter life span than non-athletes and suffer lifelong injuries. Through participation in sport men are taught to take physical risks and to ignore pain and injury. Those who learn the lessons have their masculinity further bolstered (Sabo, 1994; Young, McTear & White, 1994).

Hughes and Coakley (1991) also refer to the 'sport ethic' whereby participants, in order to be considered serious athletes, accept that risk and playing with pain and/or injury is an accepted sporting experience. These authors hypothesised that this was particularly case when participants identity and subsequent social status and mobility was strongly tied to participation. Athletes who over conform to this ethic place them at even further health risk, for example, from over training or using unhealthy off-field practices such as unhealthy weight building or management strategies (Coakley, 2004).

Challenges and Contradictions in Men's Participation in Sport

There are challenges and contradictions to dominant representations of masculinity in the 'sporting' context however these are often immensely complex as challenge and compliance can often occur on multiple levels simultaneously. For example, certain sporting subcultures, such as skateboarding may challenge some traditional notions of masculinity. Skateboarding defies many of the qualities normally associated with masculine sports. Skateboarding and the skateboarding subculture have an emphasis on cooperation rather than competition. It is expressive rather than aggressive and requires balance and co-ordination as opposed to brute

strength. In addition, skateboarding lacks formal rules. Such experiences offer some boys and men alternative athletic identities based more on cooperation, enjoyment and acquisition of skilled body movements (Beal, 2001; Philips, Davis & Phillips, 2004).

However, alternative contexts may also simply offer an alternative privileged form of masculinity that may or may not offer contradictions to overall patriarchal values. This is to be expected given that there are always multiple masculinities available with some being more highly valued than others. Contextual changes also have an impact on the value of any given masculinity at any given time. In accordance with this valued masculinities may vary according to race, ability, and sexuality (e.g., Anderson, 2009; Connell, 2005). For example, within the context of professional basketball, exalted masculinities include tall, strong, aggressive, heterosexual African-American men whereas in the field of cheerleading, strong, muscular men of alternative sexualities are also valued. Challenges or contradictions to hegemonic ideals from either men or women, may in some contexts, also result in their masculinity or femininity being questioned, along with their presumed heterosexuality (Choi, 2000; Krane et al., 2004; Hargreaves, 1994).

Organised Sport and Femininity

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's women were encouraged to participate in physical activities that enhanced femininity. These were seen to include games such as tennis or croquet. Women were excluded from sports and activities such as cycling, because it required 'too much' strength or endurance. The attitude was based largely on the medical concerns that such activities may jeopardize female reproductive capabilities, considered the core of womanliness. However, there was also fear that participation may compromise female morality (Hargreaves, 2002; Maudsley, 1874; Spencer, 1896).

Women have continued to be largely excluded from the organised sporting realm until relatively recently. For example, within the context of the Olympics, women are still excluded from some sports and their widespread participation in the Olympic movement did not increase until the 1980's. More recently, physical activity has become increasingly acceptable primarily as the dominate method for achieving and maintaining the idealized female form in regards to physical appearance (Hargreaves, 1994; Choi, 2000).

While there may be similarities in the reasons for men's and women's participation in physical activity, such as the desire for fitness, competition and social interactions, few would argue that participation holds the same meanings for males and females of that it contributes to masculine and feminine identities in the same way. Rowe (1992 cited in McKay, 1992) highlights that sportswomen are not regarded as elite athletes "except where they can be proved by their attractiveness and emotionality to be female, in which case they are females who also happen to play sport very well" (p.255).

The contribution that physical activity makes to women's' gendered identities is extremely complex. Women and girls are participating in a wider variety of sports than ever before. For many women, their athletic identity and physical abilities are central to their overall sense of self (e.g., Krane 2004). Research, such as by Russell (2002), highlights how participation in physical activity can be a key positive contributor to a women's identity whether it is in the context of typical mainstream women's sport such as netball or through participation in less common sports for women such as rugby union. A fuller description of the experiences of women such as these is provided in the later section on 'resistance'.

However, many authors support the notion that physical activity plays an affirming role in the construction of masculinity while its role in the construction of femininity is at best ambiguous and at worst stigmatizing (Choi, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994; 2000). According to Bryson (1994), sport may contribute to a woman's identity almost like an optional extra. However, it is crucially built into the identity of men. Likewise, Choi (2000) and Hargreaves (1994; 2000) argue that physical activity/participation in sports is irrelevant to the lives of many girls as it does not contribute positively to aspirations of contemporary femininity.

It has been suggested that girls participate less in sport in adolescence as a result of seeking out other activities linked more closely to their preferred perceptions of femininity. This preferred identity often involves a focus on the maintenance and evolution of relationships mediated by a sexualised, trendy, physical appearance (clothes, make-up and hairstyles etc.) and suggests that adolescent girls are unlikely to feel at ease with their bodies unless they conform to appearance ideals in some way. Therefore, they are likely to be attracted to physical activity that helps them to achieve this ideal rather than exercising for its' own sake (Hendry, 1978). Similarly, Cockburn and Clarke (2002) found in their study that although girls expressed a desire to be physically active they also thought it important to feel attractive and present a feminine image.

What Femininity is Not

Femininity, within the context of organized sport, is often defined by what it is not, that is, it is not associated with behaviours and qualities considered masculine. With gender dichotomized, participation in organized sport has long been associated with hegemonic masculinity. Women who oppose conventional femininity by participating in different kinds of physical activity often face derogatory comments

and risk negative labelling, the most obvious of which challenges their identities as 'real' (i.e., feminine) women and the assumption of heterosexuality (Hargreaves, 1994; Choi, 2000).

Participation in many organised sports violates many of the basic precepts of hegemonic femininity; for example, many organised sports promote competition over co-operation, aggression over passivity, strength over grace etc. McKay (1992) notes that for women, "the closer they come to matching male standards, the more likely they are to be accused of degrading feminine ideals" (p.252).

Issues of muscularity are significant in this context. Muscularity is intimately linked to masculinity (Choi, 2000; Holmund 1989; Mishkind, et al., 1986; Pope et al., 2000). For women to acquire muscles is to minimize the visible differences between the sexes, offering a threat not only to masculinity, but also to the overall gender order (Mutrie & Choi, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994; Kimmel, 1996; Fauldi, 1999). Musculature becomes a complicated experience for women participating in sports that demand increased muscles for performance but who wish to continue to portray images of hegemonic femininity, for example, soccer players.

Physical Activity as a Commodity

Increasing consumer markets and the commercialization of women's bodies has been one of the driving forces in increasing women's participation in physical activity, particularly in organized sport (Hargreaves, 1994; Messner, 1994; 2002). Hargreaves (2000) states that "the modern day popularized heroines of sport are trained and marketed for entertainment and spectacle; they are the products of a system which consistently induces them to abuse their bodies, tempts them to use unsporting and damaging performance-enhancing agents, and produces them as sexualized commodities for a global audience" (p.4).

Media representations of physically active women portray associations between feminized and sexualised physical activity and beauty, fitness, toned bodies and ideas of independence, freedom and empowerment. Creedon (1994) highlights how representations of sporting women within the U.S.A. have been dominated by portrayals of women as “feminine and fashionable, health conscious in their leisure pursuits, as goddesses, rather than athletic heroines” (p.114). While this phenomenon had its origins in targeting women, it appears to be broadening to include men and boys (Pope et al., 2000).

Benefits of Sporting Participation to Women

There are a variety of health, social and emotional benefits to women who participate in adequate amounts of physical activity. Many of these are described in the earlier part of this chapter. However, many benefits are difficult to quantify as they are nearly always achieved at some cost to women. Those women athletes who successfully achieve the correct balance of hegemonic femininity and athletic performance (‘doing girl’ in the language of Usner), may be rewarded with sponsorship, admiration, power and privilege, while those that do not may face discrimination and lack of financial endorsement (Crawley, 1998; Kolnes, 1995; Krane, 1997; 2001; Pirinen, 1997). Being physically strong and active may also have symbolic associations with a strong and confident sexuality (heterosexuality) and may represent being in control of one’s life and body. It can also symbolize an escape from domesticity (Bordo, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994).

Physical activity may be an empowering experience allowing women fuller expression of their physicality. Evidence from qualitative studies suggests that some women who engage in physical activities such as competitive elite level sport or non-competitive recreational sports such as wilderness canoeing, experience themselves

and their physicality in entirely new and positive ways (McDermott, 2000; Krane et al., 2004; Russell, 2002). They enjoy their strength, skills and capabilities and this promotes feelings of confidence and improved self-esteem. Physical activity not only allows women to be competitive but also aesthetic and expressive (Hargreaves, 1994).

Even participation in highly commodified physical activity such as sport aerobics can benefit women (Brabazon, 2002). While there is a consumer driven and competitive element to this activity, it provides women with the opportunity to develop muscles, improve fitness and coordination. It also allows them to join collectively to make friendships and discuss issues relevant to their lives, exercising important social and political power (Brabazon, 2002).

Participation in physical activity may also allow lesbian women opportunities to express and explore their sexuality as well as develop physical skills. Similarly, heterosexual women can use participation in some sports as a safe way of exploring non-conventional gender roles (Hillier, 2005). Hillier explored this in women Australian rules football players.

Negotiations Experienced by Women in Sport and Physical Activity

Despite the benefits, there are often complex contradictions and negotiations for women participating in sport and physical activity. Athletic experiences may result in women feeling conflict between “sports and their preferred concept of femininity” (Hargreaves (1994, *p.27*)). In such instances, sportswomen are expected to perform hegemonic femininity while distancing themselves from behaviours perceived as masculine (Krane, 2001; Krane et al., 2004). Krane and colleagues (Krane et al., 2004; Krane, 2001) describe the paradox experienced by female athletes attempting to meet the demands of sport that require them to adopt a number of masculine identified

traits and performances if they are to be successful, while simultaneously conforming to notions of hegemonic femininity. For such women, participation in physical activity results in complex negotiations in order to maintain a satisfactory balance.

Performative gender, such as 'doing girl' which was discussed more extensively in an earlier section, can be used to explain how some women negotiate this complex gendered territory (Russell, 2002; Usner, 1997). Within the physical activity context women are able to engage in various scripts of performative gender, particularly that of 'doing girl' whereby they satisfy some of externally dictated criterion for femininity e.g., about how they should look, without fully engaging in the underlying values and beliefs typically attributed with it. They can shift to other scripts such as 'resisting girl' at other times when such a position might be more acceptable. Women who can successfully 'do girl' within the physical activity context may be rewarded for playing the game, e.g., through increased endorsements and sponsorship. Therefore, women may not only be 'victim' to sexualised images and projections but also may actively participate in these in order to gain the benefits associated with it. The counter argument is, of course, that if women are unable to gain success in other ways or with alternatives, this is not really a meaningful choice (Bordo, 1993; Butler, 1990).

Qualitative studies show that women athletes may feel satisfied with the presentation and functionality of their bodies in the sporting context; however, they feel concerned about these same traits in social settings (Greenleaf, 2002; Krane, Waldron, Michalenok & Stiles-Shipely, 2001; Krane et al., 2004; Russell, 2002). In particular, their strong, muscular and skilled bodies provide them with satisfaction on the field, but off the field it can result in ill fitting clothes and fears of being viewed as too muscular.

For many women the ties between physical activity and appropriate displays of femininity are achieved through the realm of physical appearance. Femininity can be enhanced through the use of adornments such as jewellery, hairstyles or sexualized sporting attire (Hargreaves, 1994; Kolnes, 1995; Veri, 1999). Such additions seek to increase sex appeal for marketing purposes and reassure male audiences that participants are still 'real' women. Physical activity may become more suitable and desirable as an activity when it clearly reflects hegemonic femininity or is aimed at improving physical appearances (through achieving a suitable weight or amount of toning). However, ideally it must both reflect and reaffirm hegemonic femininity (Choi, 2000).

Resistance

Despite the complex gendered negotiations often required by many women in their engagement with physical activity, many do participate and the act of participation can challenge and redefine traditional notions of femininity to varying degrees. For example, there are increasing numbers of girls playing previously masculine defined sports like surfing, Australian rules football, cricket, soccer, rugby and ice hockey. However, participation in such activities may offer both resistance, through the decision to participate in a physical activity that is individualistic or highly competitive, or highly comparative and thus considered masculine, while at the same time being confirmative when played by women choosing to display obvious markers of femininity such as having long hair in a ponytail. Participation in such sports may also simply endorse acceptance of these masculine discourses without challenging them in any way. Feminist theories of performative gender (e.g., Usser,

1997) allow these constant, simultaneous negotiations to be considered. In terms of participation numbers the converse is not true. Boys are not engaging in feminine defined sports at increasing rates.

In addition, increasing numbers of women are engaging in physical activities that resist or oppose masculine constructions of organized sport. Thorpe (2005) highlights how women within sports such as snowboarding have collectively exercised political power, for example, in addressing social issues impacting on women such as breast cancer through awareness and fundraising activities. Women in snowboarding have also achieved some success in reducing objectified images of women in that sport's media presentation. Furthermore, they have gained parity in prize money at some events. Thorpe highlights the contribution to women's collective empowerment that can be made by the development of skilled, athletic abilities. Hargreaves (2000) notes that "working outside the mainstream facilitates the creation of new models of sport authentically connected to power, knowledge and emotional life" (p.4). Examples of alternatives include social versions of mainstream sports such as tennis and netball, the Gay Games and the Amazon Softball League which often integrate physical activity with health issues such as fundraising for cancer or HIV. Such events promote fun; minimize competition, often "encourage a positive, healthy and holistic approach to exercise, raise consciousness about cancers that affect women and raise money for research" (Hargreaves, 2000, p.4). These events also focus on the 'sensuous' elements of physical activity and the role the body plays in women's experiences.

Kane (1995) also argues for a more radical form of resistance and transformation that is that is not tied simply to gender. Kane (1995) suggests that dichotomous thinking should be abandoned when it comes to sport and instead sport

should be considered as existing on a continuum. If this was to occur sport could be re-structured along totally new lines such as ability rather than gender. She believes that considering sport in this way would transform it for both men and women (Kane, 1995).

Summary

It can be argued that, just as there is hegemonic masculinity and femininity, there exists a hierarchy of culturally preferred sports and physical activity. At the top of this hierarchy would be sports most exalted and idealized, not necessarily the most popular in terms of participation numbers. Within contemporary Westernized societies such as Australia and the U.S.A. male organised sports would be seen as being at the pinnacle of the hierarchy. They include, golf, soccer, basketball, Australian rules football, cricket, rugby league and union, horse racing, motor racing and ice hockey. Such sports are in reality multi-million dollar industries and highly commodified, mostly targeting male participants and spectators, although female spectators are also encouraged to spend their money. Many of these sports reflect and reinforce notions of hegemonic masculinity in their administration and in the way they are played. Further down the hierarchy are other 'masculine' organised sports, masculine types of gym work, disabled sports, feminine sports, sports of the elderly and the very young, and unstructured physical activity and play. This hierarchy is very important in understanding sufficient physical activity levels as the physical activity at the bottom end is often the most valuable to the individual and society as a whole, but also the least culturally exalted.

For many men participation in sport and physical activity serves to provide a validation of their masculinity and can provide them with many physical, social, economic and emotional benefits (Bryson, 1994; Messner, 2002; Rowe & McKay,

1998; Whitson, 1990). The behaviours and characteristics embodied in many organized sports such as competitiveness, winning at all costs, aggression, virile heterosexuality etc., are also intrinsically tied to desirable masculine traits in wider society. Furthermore, successful participation in organised sport and physical activity is intimately tied to the ideal physical appearance for men. However, subscription to hegemonic ideals embedded in sports can also result in detrimental effects to mental, physical and emotional health (Messner, 2002; Sabo, 1994; White, Young & McTeer, 1995).

Participation in physical activity may provide a continuum of experiences for many girls and women. It might be argued, therefore, that within the hierarchy of desired traits or behaviours associated with femininity, while sporting ability rates quite low, sporting appearance is gaining in importance. This assertion is in line with current notions of hegemonic femininity driven by consumer markets.

While participation may be associated with feelings and experiences of empowerment, independence and freedom for some women, its contribution to female gendered identity is often ambiguous. For example, participation in sport and physical activity may be associated with some physical ideals such as thinness, but muscularity and strength beyond a given point are also associated with masculinity. These attributes as well as other qualities valued in many organized sports such as competition, winning at all costs and aggression are often associated with masculinity and 'deviant forms' of female sexuality, in particular, lesbianism. Despite this, large numbers of women are continuing to engage in physical activity and are playing previously considered 'masculine' sports such as soccer and football.

Resistance and negotiations with these dominant models of organized sports has taken two major forms for both men and women. Some resistance has occurred by actively constructing alternative sporting models such as the Gay Games or the Amazon Softball League. Individuals may also engage in forms of resistance by participating in physical activity that challenges traditional gender stereotypes, for example, women playing Australian rules football. Resistance and negotiation may also be viewed through the lens of performative gender whereby individuals assume different gender performances at different times while continuing to participate in existing sports and physical activity.

While a small number of studies have examined the negotiations that athletic women face in participating in their chosen sporting field, this has largely been examined in elite athletes who might be seen as having a high level of investment in their athletic ability and identity, in terms financial benefits, social status or educational opportunities (e.g., Krane et al., 2004; Russell, 2002). These same issues have not been extensively examined in non-elite level athletes or in children and adolescents or boys or men. This thesis has a particular interest in these groups as they may be seen as having quite different connections to and experiences of physical activity. Given that the decline in physical activity is first evidenced in the early adolescent period, this would appear to be an important area for further investigation.

Unlike older athletes, young people might be less aware of these negotiations and experiences, but evidence of such negotiations may be found in the descriptions of their lives. Greater detail and insight might be expected with increased cognitive development. However, many negotiations are likely to be so subtle as to be easily missed. This thesis will address this by using quantitative and in-depth qualitative methods.

The Impact of Socialisation

Adolescence is a beauty pageant. Even if your daughter doesn't want to be a contestant; others will look at her as if she is.

In *Girl World*, everyone is automatically entered (Wiseman, 2002, p.77).

Overview

With a complex array of socialising influences you would expect an equally complex impact on individuals. This section will explore more specifically how socialisation and gender influences impact on young people in terms of how they are treated by others, how they view the bodies of others and themselves, and how they feel about themselves in relation to physical self-concept, self-esteem, body satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Although these issues have been explored most extensively through quantitative research with adults, qualitative research examining the experiences of children is substantially lacking. This is an issue addressed by the current thesis.

Differential Treatment of Girls and Boys

When it comes to physical experiences, it has been well documented that girls and boys are treated differently by those around them including caregivers and teachers. Hargreaves (1994, p.3) cites evidence that male children are: (a) tossed around and wrestled with more frequently and vigorously, (b) encouraged to be adventurous and play vigorous outdoor games, (c) provided with fighting toys, football and action figures and (d) allowed more freedom to travel away from home for sporting events. Conversely, girls are handled more gently, more closely supervised, allowed less physical freedom, provided with domestic toys, skipping ropes and Barbie dolls and restricted in travels away from home for sporting events. More recently, authors such as Bronstein (2006), Hagan and Kuebli (2007), Leaper

(2000), Macoby (1998) have also noted differences in the ways that girls and boys are treated (see Bronstein, 2006 for a review) however they also highlighted that this can vary depending on a number of factors e.g., the gender of the parent, the type of activity being conducted and the age of the child.

Examination of gender differences in the treatment of children in schools has also been extensively studied. Martin (1998) found that within the preschool setting girls are not only encouraged to behave more quietly and sit appropriately, but their physical appearance is adjusted more often through grooming activities than is the case for boys.

More specifically, a review of the literature on gender equity in physical education conducted in 2003 (Davis) cites much evidence that girls and boys continue to be treated differently by teachers in schools. Differences in treatment have been identified in many studies and include differences in both verbal and non-verbal interactions. Such differences include:

1. Male students being more often interacted with, questioned and given more comprehensive instructions than female students.
2. Male students being praised for performance and provided with correction while girls are praised for effort.
3. Girls being more likely to receive positive reinforcement regarding their physical presentation and appropriate behaviour while being chastised for academic weaknesses (Pipher, 1994).
4. Male students being used more frequently in demonstrating physical skills.
5. Educators having higher expectations and perceptions of male students behaviour and ability in physical activity and holding beliefs that boys are more skilled, able, strong, and physically fit.

6. Continued use of curriculum and teaching strategies that reinforce gender bias such as promoting competition, gender based allocation of tasks and roles and removal of certain activities such as dance, from the curriculum.
7. Failure to intervene in inappropriate gender based interactions between students.

Differences have also been found in the treatment of girls and boys in the context of organized sport where coaches and assistants treat them differently (Landers & Fine, 1996). For example, Landers and Fine (1996) observed gender based differences in treatment of kindergarten aged T-ball players. In this study, coaches perceived girls to be less serious and less skilled than the boys. The boys were given more central positions on the team than were girls.

Physicality in the Context of Games and Physical Activity

Gender differences in physical movement are evident even in very young children with boys being more active and adventurous, and girls participating in quieter activities with smaller-scale movements (Ryan, 1985). Girls' and boys' participation and physicality in the context of games has been extensively examined. Consistent gender differences have been observed. The differences found within the physical activity context often reflect those found outside it (Adler & Adler, 1992, 1998; Eder, 1995; Lever, 1976; Macoby, 1990, 1998; Martin, 1998; Schmalz and Kerstetter, 2006; Sutton-Smith, 1979; Young, 1990). Based on mostly American studies, girls' games and physicality's have been characterized by: (a) partial body involvement; (b) small body movements; (c) throwing actions that lack a step, twist and shoulder involvement; (d) simple turn taking; (e) co-operation; (f) intimate

relationships; (g) conformity and compliance; (h) focus on appearance and/or popularity; (i) quietness; (j) avoidance of conflict; (k) use of props such as pom poms or skipping ropes.

Boys' games and physicality have been characterized by: (a) highly physical components; (b) competitiveness, (c) the acceptance and encouragement of conflict, (d) aggressiveness, (e) complexity, (f) large group participation, (g) large space requirements, (h) achievement orientation, (i) 'toughness'; (j) assertiveness; (k) greater physical relaxation and (l) loudness.

The ability of boys to dominate physical space and games using a combination of the above factors has been found in several studies. For example, McGrath & Kuriloff (1999) in a study of sixth grade girls and boys, observed how boys in one school were able to displace an established group of girls by using large groups, highly structured and competitive games that were reinforced by the school curriculum. Boyle, Marshall and Robeson (2003) also observed that the nine to ten year old boys in their study tended to play loud highly physical games which utilised a lot of gross-motor movement. They also tended to occupy large areas of space, further from active monitoring than the girls. Girls were allowed to join in such games but only if she was skilled. Boys were also observed to defend their space from those not involved in the game and were more likely to invade the space of others, particularly girls. In other studies boys have been observed to determine the pace and direction of games in mixed gender games. Girls tend to become marginalized and/or watch from the side (Evans, 1989; Leaman, 1984; Mahony, 1985; Wolpe, 1977 cited in Hargreaves, 1994, *p.7*).

Gender differences in how children play have been found in even younger children. For example, a study of kindergarten boys and girls found that when playing a bead sorting game in mixed-sex group's boys were more competitive than the girls (Weinberger & Stein, 2008). The boys were also more likely to do retaliative moves, however no significance was found in the use of strategy.

Differences in physicality and bodily movements learnt/acquired in early childhood are also evident in adulthood. In general women's bodies and movements are more confined and restricted than those of men (Henley, 1977; Young, 1990, Thomas & French 1985). "For example, women take smaller steps than men, sit in closed positions (arms and legs crossed across the body), take up less physical space than men.... and are generally tentative when using their bodies" (Martin, 1998, p.494).

Beliefs about Capabilities and Limited Physicality

With such different experiences and treatment boys and girls could be expected to come to view themselves, their physical bodies and their abilities and capabilities differently. It is of little surprise that beliefs about physical capabilities differ significantly with gender (Choi, 2000). For example, studies have found that even when differences in motor abilities are accounted for, girls believe themselves to be less strong and physically effective than boys (Cifton & Smith, 1963; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Gross, 1968).

Accounting for Differences

The studies of motor abilities, such as throwing, have demonstrated that the differences between the sexes cannot be accounted for by physical differences (such as differences in height, weight etc.) (Kimura, 1999) nor can they be accounted for by prior experiences or practice (Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005; Hall & Kimura, 1995;

Watson & Kimura, 1991; Williams, 1996). While gender differences in physical ability of movement may be promoted as real and natural, some authors contend that these differences are directly related to the socializing influences and experiences that young people receive (Butler, 1990, 1993; Hargreaves, 1994; West and Zimmerman 1987; Young, 1980, 1990). Further, gender inequities are at least partially the result of the tensions and anxieties that women feel about their bodies and the resultant translation of such experiences into a variety of other areas (Hargreaves, 1994; Young, 1990).

Recognition of Ideal Bodies in Children

Socializing forces have a major impact on young people's perceptions and expectations of themselves and others physically. This includes their views on what is ideal and desirable in terms of physical appearance. Ideas about ideal bodies and stereotypes about the attributes and qualities of the people who do and do not possess them begin early in childhood (Attie & Brooks-Gunn, 1987; Maloney et al., 1989; Grogan & Wainwright, 1996; Grogan et al., 1997; Thompson et al., 1998). Quantitative and qualitative studies have found that even children as young as six years old have an awareness of and preference for idealized forms of physical attractiveness including thinness for girls and muscularity for boys (Grogan & Wainwright, 1996; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Pine, 2001). The hegemonic forms of physical attractiveness previously described are most highly desired.

Focus groups of boys and men aged between 8 and 25 years showed that all ages identified the ideal male body as being toned, muscular within limits, and looking "fit" (Grogan & Richards, 2002, p.224). Boys and men described the ideal

body in terms of its appearance and its function. However, while muscularity was intimately linked with fitness, physical appearance rather than functionality was linked to feelings of confidence and happiness (Grogan & Richards, 2002).

Development of Attitudes and Stereotypes Regarding Physical Appearance

With recognition and ascription to physical ideals come beliefs and attitudes about those who fail to meet these ideals. Children, parents and educators have all been found to hold negative opinions and stereotypes of people who are overweight as previously discussed (Bell & Morgan, 2000; Canning and Mayer, 1966; Cramer & Steinwert, 1998; Crandall, 1991; Davison & Birch, 2004; Greenleaf et al., 2006; Kraig & Keel, 2001; Latner & Stunkard, 2003; Levine, 1987; Quinn, 1987; Rothblum, 1993; Schroer, 1985; Shapiro, Newcomb, & Loeb, 1997). The perceptions include those of overweight children as lonely, lazy, sloppy, slow, dirty, stupid, ugly, and less popular with peers and less smart (Greenleaf et al., 2006; Hill & Silver, 1995; Levine, 1987; Staffieri, 1967). More recently, Sykes and McPhail (2008) conducted a retrospective study of the experiences of individuals who identified as overweight while at school. They primarily focused on peoples experiences in physical education.

Their recollections of physical education were overwhelmingly negative, ranging from horrific to traumatic to incredulous and cynical. These memories of physical education illustrate how fat-phobic discourses construct the fat body as out of control, out of place, and out of shape. Many people recalled feelings of alienation, dread and disembodiment that indicate how the possibility of fat subjectivity was repeatedly foreclosed during physical education (Sykes & McPhail, *p.* 67).

Longhurst (2005) also refers to fat phobia, whereby even those individuals who are not fat, come to fear being fat.

Body Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction in Children and Adolescence

The studies examining body satisfaction and dissatisfaction in children and adults reveal clear developmental and gender based trends. Body dissatisfaction has been identified in pre-adolescent girls as young as six years of age (Brodie et al., 1994; Collins, 1991; Gustafson-Larson & Terry, 1992; Grogan & Wainwright, 1996; Hill & Pallin, 1998; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Maloney et al., 1989; Pine, 2001; Rolland et al., 1997; Schur et al., 2000; Thelen & Cormier, 1995; Thompson et al., 1997; Tiggemann & Pennington, 1990; Tiggemann & Wilson-Barrett, 1998; Wood et al., 1996). For girls, body dissatisfaction is usually associated with the general desire for thinness although concern may also manifest itself in the desire to reduce the size of specific body parts, such as thighs and stomach. Prevalence rates of body dissatisfaction of between 40% and 50% have been found in pre-adolescent Australian and American girls (Blowers, Loxton, Grady-Flessner, Occhippinti & Dawes, 2003; Kelly, Ricciardelli, & Clarke, 1999; Neumark-Sztainer, Story, Hannan, Perry & Irving, 2002; Rolland et al., 1997). BMI (BMI) is strongly related to body satisfaction in adolescent and pre-adolescent girls, with those girls with higher BMI's reporting increased incidence of dissatisfaction (Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001; Stice, 1998).

The findings regarding developmental trends in body satisfaction/dissatisfaction have been mixed. Some studies have reported no significant differences between seven to eight year olds and 11 to 12 year olds, while other studies have reported increased body dissatisfaction with age (Folk et al., 1993; Gardner, Sorter, & Friedman, 1997; Mellin, Irwin & Scully, 1992; Thelen, Powell, Lawrence, & Kuhnert, 1992; Tiggemann & Wilson-Barrett, 1998). For girls, body satisfaction in the pre-pubertal years for girls has been associated with an increased ability to conform to societal ideals, which disappears once puberty is reached and weight gain comes with

physical maturation (Folk, Pederson & Cullari, 1993). Gender role expectations also increase with age and are thought to contribute to adolescent females' body dissatisfaction (Striegel-Moore and Cachelin, 1999, *p.*86).

Studies also show that men and boys are increasingly dissatisfied with their bodies (Drummond, 1999; 2001; Levine & Smolak, 2002; Morgan, 2002; Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2000a; Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2004; Tiggemann, Martins, & Churchett, 2008). Consecutive surveys by Psychology Today in 1972, 1985 and 1997 showed a dramatic increase in men's dissatisfaction with their bodies and their appearances over that 25 year period (from 25% in 1972 to 56% in 1997) (Berscheid, Walster & Bohrnstedt, 1973; Cash, Winstead & Janda, 1986; Garner, 1997). These studies suggest a narrowing of the gap between men's and women's in body dissatisfaction and demonstrated stability in the dissatisfaction felt by men across the developmental span covered (13 – 59 years).

Body dissatisfaction in men and boys may be manifest in dissatisfaction with their weight, musculature or body shape (Cohane & Pope, 2001; Cohn & Adler, 1992; Levinson, Powell, & Steelman, 1986; Lowes & Tiggeman, 2003; Moore, 1990; Page & Allen, 1995; Pope, Gruber, Mangweth, Bureau, deCol, Jouvent, & Hudson, 2000; Timko & Rodin, 1988). Boy's dissatisfaction with weight may reflect the desire for increased muscle, particularly bigger arms and chests rather than fat (Cohane & Pope, 2001; Cohn & Adler, 1992; Levinson et al., 1986; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Page & Allen, 1995; Pope et al., 2000a; Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001; Silberstein, Striegel-

Moore, Timko, & Rodin, 1988; Smolak, Levine & Thompson, 2001; Staffieri, 1967). Men and boys have also expressed the desire to be taller, lighter and heavier (Cohane & Pope, 2001; Gustafson-Larson & Terry, 1992; Mishkind et al., 1986; Moore, 1990; Parks & Read, 1997).

The extent of body dissatisfaction in boys and men may be under reported for a variety of methodological reasons such as lack of anonymity (Cohane & Pope, 2001). Body dissatisfaction in men may also be especially compounded by dominant discourses about masculinity, in particular the belief that men should not talk about their problems or feelings, or that to do so reflects a feminine related trait – vanity, thus resulting in under-reporting of such issues (Pope et al., 2000a).

Developmental differences in body dissatisfaction for boys is the reverse of that for girls with increased levels of preadolescent dissatisfaction followed by increasing satisfaction with age (e.g., Folk et al., 1993). The increased body satisfaction of adolescent boys as compared to adolescent girls has been explained by physical maturation drawing boys closer to physical ideals while the reverse is true for girls (Hargreaves, 1994; Offer, Schonert-Reichl, & Boxer, 1996).

Consequences of Body Dissatisfaction

The 2007 American Psychological Association (APA) taskforce concluded that the sexualisation of girls and women in the media contributes to eating disorders, low self-esteem, depressed mood and body dissatisfaction (APA, 2007). In girls, body dissatisfaction is associated with “unhealthy weight loss behaviours such as restricting food intake, purging and over-exercising behaviours that have a number of detrimental health effects including retarded growth and delayed puberty” (Polivy & Herman, 1993; Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001). Other unhealthy weight loss behaviours include fasting, smoking, vomiting and using laxatives to control weight

(Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2002). Body dissatisfaction and dieting behaviours are related to an increased risk of eating disorders (Attie & Brooks-Gunn, 1989; Patton, Johnson-Sabine, Wood, Mann & Wakeling, 1990; Polivy & Herman, 1993).

In men, striving for unrealistic physical goals may be associated with body dissatisfaction and eating disorders as well as the use of steroids and untested dietary supplements (Peixoto Labre, 2002, *p.4*). Body dissatisfaction is also associated with muscle dysmorphia, a disorder whereby muscular men become preoccupied with their body shape, perpetually seeing themselves as being thin and underdeveloped (Choi, Pope & Olivardia, 2002; Olivardia et al., 2000; Pope, et al., 1997). Muscle dysmorphia is associated with decreased self-esteem, mood and anxiety disorders, eating disorders and steroid use (Pope et al., 1997; Olivardia et al., 2000). Body dissatisfaction and the desire for the ideal body may also result in increased risk of problematic over-exercising (Peixoto Labre, 2002). Men may use exercise as a way of losing weight or to counteract eating. Some researchers have suggested that men's use of exercise is the behavioural equivalent to purging or self-induced vomiting in women (Weltzin, Weisensel, Franczyk, Burnett, Klitz, & Bean, 2005).

Although even young children may experience body dissatisfaction, the qualitative experience and factors influencing this may differ from those of older adolescents and adults (Blowers et al., 2003; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003). For example, while body dissatisfaction may not directly impact on self-esteem in younger age groups or result in problematic behaviours such as eating disorders or steroid use, this dissatisfaction may form the basis of early belief systems and cognitive schemas that later shape and reflect an individual's experiences (Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Usmiani & Daniluk, 1997). The adoption of problematic beliefs and schema's at an early age may therefore contribute to the ongoing adoption of

problematic beliefs and schemas at a later age which can be associated with related body image issues. For example, early beliefs about the importance of thinness may contribute to later beliefs about importance of thinness and the undesirability of fatness contributing to distorted beliefs about what the ideal body should look like and how this image can be achieved.

The Impact of Objectification

Reduced body satisfaction is just one of the negative consequences associated with the inability to meet societal ideals. Negative consequences may also arise from other ways in which individuals view themselves and their bodies. As previously identified, an issue situated at the crossroads of body dissatisfaction and theories of socialization is that of self-objectification. Self objectification theory arises from feminist accounts of the experiences of women in a society that sexually objectifies them and treats them as objects subject to the external gaze of others. Theorists argue that women are constantly in the process of monitoring their external appearances and when they fail to reach the impossibly high standards set by their cultural and social surroundings, they experience shame and anxiety related to their body and its appearance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Noll & Fredrickson, 1998). The tendency for women to self-objectify is thought to contribute to a range of negative outcomes including mental health problems such as eating disorders and mood disorders like depression, and sexual dysfunction (Calogero, Davis & Thompson, 2005; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Greenleaf & McGreer, 2006; Miner-Rubino, Twenge, & Fredrickson, 2002; Moradi, Dirks & Matteson, 2005; Tylka & Hill, 2004; Noll & Fredrickson, 1998). In addition to specific mental health conditions, high scores in

self-objectification are also associated with lowered body satisfaction, body esteem and self-esteem as well as increased body shame and anxiety (Greenleaf & McGreer, 2006), Miner-Rubino et al., 2002; Strelan, Mehaffey & Tiggemann, 2003).

Research on self-objectification also makes another important distinction and shows that, while adult women have consistent levels of body dissatisfaction across the life span associated with wishing to be thinner, they experience increasingly less concern with appearance related attributes with age. In shifting the focus from appearance to functionality, they experienced fewer negative consequences such as lower rates of habitual body monitoring, appearance anxiety and restrained and disordered eating (Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001).

Furthermore, self-objectification has been implicated in reducing an individual's ability to have 'flow' experiences (Greenleaf, 2005; Greenleaf & McGreer, 2006). Flow experiences are optimal experiences in which individuals fully engage in skilful and challenging activities simply for the sake of the activity. As such, these experiences are unique in that they invite no external gaze or comparisons with others and are accompanied by a lack of self consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). It is thought that the focus and monitoring of the self prevents individuals from truly immersing themselves in the activity or action, reducing their chances of experiencing 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Induction of self-objectification has also been associated with poorer functioning on some cognitive tasks such as mathematical problems causing speculation that women's situations of self-objectification may result in diminished cognitive functioning in a variety of other circumstances (Hebl, King & Lin, 2004).

Self objectification may also impact on specific motor abilities. Trait self-objectification has been used to predict motor abilities in girls. Higher levels of trait self-objectification are associated with poorer throwing performance as measured using a standardised analysis of the throwing action (Fredrickson and Harrison, 2005). Some authors have speculated that self-objectification may contribute to general reductions in physical activity (Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005).

Who Does Self-Objectification Effect?

Tendencies to self-objectify have been assessed quantitatively in women with ages ranging from 10 to 84 years (Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005; Slater & Tiggemann, 2002; Strelan et al., 2003; Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001). Self-objectification and body surveillance were found to be highest in the youngest age groups and lowest in the oldest, with a continual decrease across the lifespan (Slater and Tiggemann, 2002; Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001). Few studies have examined the experience of self-objectification in the pre-adolescent period. It has been argued that teasing may be a form of objectification for young girls (Smolak et al., 2001).

Recent research provides evidence that self-objectification is not just an issue effecting White, Western women. Men have been increasingly sexually objectified since the 1980's (Osgerby, 1998). Sexual objectification has been found to impact on women and men of a variety of ethnic backgrounds including Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic and Asian American (Hebl et al., 2004). One such study found that women have higher levels of trait self-objectification as measured by the SOQ than did men. However, it was also found that Hispanic women experienced higher levels of self-objectification than Caucasian and African American women respectively. Asian American men experienced higher levels of self-objectification than did Caucasian men and African American men (Hebl et al., 2004).

Using the SOQ and other measures of self-objectification such as the body surveillance and body shame scales of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale women have been found to have consistently higher scores on measures of self-objectification than men (Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004). Men who employ greater self-surveillance are more likely to experience body shame, appearance anxiety, decreased flow, disordered eating and depressed mood, fitting the model similar to that is seen in women (Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004).

However, self-objectification as measured by the SOQ does not show the same associations with other constructs for men as for women. This suggests that items/attributes on the SOQ such as strength may have different meanings and interpretations with women viewing them more as functional characteristics and men viewing them as related to appearance (Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004). Researchers suggest that this means that self-objectification as experienced by women may be qualitatively different to men's experiences, and a focus on muscularity for men may not be the equivalent of a focus on thinness or other observable attributes for women. However, girls may simply internalize body ideals about thinness to a greater extent than boys internalize muscularity ideals, thus differentially impacting on subsequent relationships with other constructs (Smolak et al., 2001).

Other gender differences in self-objectification have also been reported. Quinn, Kallen and Cathey (2006) found that women experience significantly more body shame than men when exposed to temporarily self-objectifying situations. Women were also significantly more likely to experience body related thoughts ten minutes after leaving an objectifying experience than were men.

Regardless of gender, the negative outcomes of objectification are similar in that “the body becomes an object that is manipulated, disciplined and viewed by others” (Rohlinger, 2002, *p.62*). It is the self surveillance and focus on external appearances that contributes to negative health consequences for both men and women (Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004). Tiggemann & Kuring (2004) claim that:

bodies need to be viewed in a more holistic way, and other body attributes such as skill development or increases in functional capacity need to be relatively more valued. Metaphorically, bodies need to be reclaimed ‘from the inside’ in terms of how they feel and what they can do, rather than experienced primarily from the observer’s perspective (*p.309*).

Complexity in Predicting Outcomes

Based on knowledge about body ideals, it might be reasonable to assume that increased participation in physical activity or a decrease in BMI for women and an increase for men, might result in increased body satisfaction as this would hypothetically pull individuals closer to societal ideals. However, the relationships between participation in physical activity and different aspects of body satisfaction are more complex. For example, reasons for participation in physical activity have been found to have an influence on body satisfaction, eating disorders/disturbances and body esteem. Exercising for the specific purposes of weight control and improving attractiveness has been associated with negative consequences in women (Furnham, Badmin, & Sneade, 2002; McDonald & Thompson, 1992; Silberstein et al., 1988; Tiggemann & Williamson, 2000). Exercising for fitness health benefits or pleasure has been found to have more positive consequences (Strelan et al., 2003; Tiggemann, & Williamson, 2000).

Exercising for Appearance

Self-objectification theory may therefore, be useful in explaining why exercise that focuses on improving appearance, may not translate into increased body satisfaction even if the goal is achieved. Strelan et al. (2003) found that women who exercise for appearance related reasons scored more highly in self-objectification than those exercising for functional reasons such as, health, fitness, mood, enjoyment etc. Those who scored more highly in self-objectification also experienced decreased body satisfaction, body esteem and self-esteem.

Promotion of physical activity participation by promising improved physical appearance is likely to be problematic in other ways as well (Leslie et al., 1999; Kientzler, 1999). The strived-for 'look' or physical appearance may never be achieved due to its unrealistic nature. Exercise for this purpose has been shown to be difficult to sustain (Mutrie & Choi, 2000). It may also result in over exercising although the evidence for this is mixed (Hausenblaus & Fallon, 2002).

'Seeking the gaze' through exercise designed to improve appearance is also disempowering in two ways. Firstly, it prevents the individual from gaining confidence derived from physical mastery (Gilroy, 1989; Whitson, 1994) and secondly, it removes self-determination from individuals in terms of how they choose to present themselves (Smith 1990a). Women's feelings about themselves and their bodies may be improved if they exercise for the purpose of feeling better rather than looking better (Prichard & Tiggemann, 2005; Strelan et al., 2003).

Distancing from the "Gaze"

Those who consciously, or by the virtue of their chosen sport, distance themselves from the 'gaze' of others and themselves may also experience the functionality of their body more strongly. In this perspective, which draws upon

earlier Foucaultian foundations, the physical body is seen to be experienced through the achievement of particular functions or activities, rather than how that function or activity is perceived by others (Brace-Govan, 2002). The view of the body as something functional that can achieve quantifiable, objective measures of success has been associated with the view of the physical body boys are encouraged to take (Connell, 1983, 1987, 1995). This viewpoint provides a more individualistic self perspective rather than relying and seeking out the perspectives of others.

Lived Experiences – The Impact of Socialisation

Qualitative studies provide a fuller understanding of the lived experiences of individuals in regards to their bodies and how they negotiate various socialising influences. Such studies go beyond a one dimensional assessment of body image related concepts and examine them in the complexity of life experiences. Many of the qualitative studies on this topic area have focused on elite athletic women. Studies of men and young people have been less common. The investigations of athletic women are particularly rich sources of information about women's experiences in physical activity as they examine the negotiations faced by skilled physically active women in a context dominated by male ideologies and imagery. Analysis of individuals' experiences shows evidence of contradictions and negotiations, resistance and submission in the uses of bodies and in individuals' views and feelings about themselves.

Earlier studies on women participating in traditionally male dominated sports such as ice hockey have focused on the resistance this offered to dominant notions of femininity (e.g., Chu, Leberman, Howe, & Bachor, 2003; Theberge, 2003). This resistance was evidenced in women's use of and attitudes to their bodies. Many women were identified as embracing strong, skilled, aggressive physical presences

and adopting 'male' attitudes within the games and in their approaches to aspects such as injury and playing while injured (Chu, Leberman, Howe, & Bachor, 2003; Theberge, 2003).

Recent qualitative studies exploring the experiences of women athletes have found that athletic women undergo complex negotiations in regards to their bodies and gendered identity both within and outside the sporting context. For example, George (2005), Greenleaf (2002), Krane et al (2004), and Russell (2002) all highlight the constant 'balancing' between the performance, on-the-field, athletic body and the appearance body desired in many social contexts. The women interviewed in each of these studies made repeated reference to the empowering functionality of their performance bodies while participating in their chosen sports. This included feelings of enhanced physical functionality through being strong and muscular, pride in their sporting achievements, their body's capacities and different appearance, as well as feelings of empowerment. They described enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem. However, this often stood in contrast to their feelings about their bodies in the social context where they reported feeling different to other women, less feminine and dissatisfied with the shape and appearance of their bodies. Many simply accepted this discord, but others made active attempts to enhance their femininity, mostly through the use of clothing and other adornments.

Cockburn and Clarke (2002) provided a related examination of the lived experiences of boys and girls in the context of high school physical education lessons. Their findings about girls' experiences were similar to the later findings of older athletic women. They found that physical education lessons resulted in complex gendered identity negotiations for the girls, in their study. They referred to the 'femininity deficit' that occurred for girls participating actively in physical education

and the various negotiations girls made to counteract this. For some it meant disengagement with physical education which, if done in a particular manner, could actually bolster an individuals' representation of femininity. Abstinence from physical activity, coupled with obvious visual markers of femininity such as certain types of clothing or other adornments can accentuate girls' femininity, in similar ways previously described by Choi and Pitts (2003). Other girls managed the contradictions by adopting 'double identities' and developing "a practical knowledge of coping skills and strategies" (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002, *p.*661). They concluded that these experiences in physical education exacerbated the already difficult developmental task of identity formation and resulted in confusion and tension in the girls' sense of self.

McDermott (2000) examined women's experiences of their physicality in the context of wilderness canoeing. Unlike the studies previously mentioned, these women were not elite level athletes. This study found that its women experienced their physical capabilities in very different ways. The integration of these experiences into their everyday physical activity experiences or feelings towards themselves is unknown.

A study by Rubin, Lemeroff and Russo (2004) showed the power of self and other scrutiny in the lives of feminist women who were acutely aware of socialising forces. In this qualitative study women described being constantly aware of their own body as well as the bodies of other women. Interestingly, these women, who were aware of and actively attempted to resist the messages portrayed by society in regards to ideals of body image, beauty and appearance, found that they still struggled with

challenging it. Furthermore, they reported experiencing guilt and shame when they felt they accepted or conformed to some of these pervasive messages (Rubin et al., 2004, *p.35*).

Some studies have examined the experiences of boys and men. Grogan and Richards (2002) used focus groups to find that boys and men expressed contradictory and complex stories about their bodies. The boys and men in the study identified both appearance and functionality as important to them. Many participants described the desire to obtain a certain look (toned, lean, and muscular) and associated that look with fitness, social acceptance, increased confidence and happiness. The study highlighted the complex uses of exercise for this group. Physical activity was seen as an acceptable way of avoiding fatness, but was not acceptable if used to improve appearance. To use it in such a way would be seen as vain and 'unmasculine'.

Similarly, Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2006) conducted qualitative research into body image with 14 to 16 year old Australian boys. The boys in their study indicated that concern over physical appearance was not of high concern to them and was most important when trying to impress girls. To these boys looking like their friends was important to their physical appearance. These boys had aspects to their physical appearance that they wished to change, primarily their weight, muscularity and height. This study also found that discussions about physical appearance and body image were considered "gay" or "girle".

A retrospective study of boys' masculinity in the context of school physical education (PE) also revealed information about the everyday negotiations that boys experienced in regards to their physicality and masculinity. This study found that many boys experienced PE as overt lessons in masculinity (Davison, 2000). They reported that "one needs to act masculine through speech and bodily gestures as well

as physically embody masculinity through size, stature, and muscularity” (Davison, 2000, *p.*257). In this study the men reported that as boys, they were acutely aware as boys of the hegemonic standards demanded, and that failure to live up to them led to feelings of discomfort, later body image issues, embarrassment and humiliation. Some boys found ways of partially fitting the ideal, or ways of ‘passing’ as meeting the ideal. For example, one young man found ways of physically embodying masculinity while having a gay sexual orientation that would have been otherwise unacceptable. Achieving the physical masculine ideals was perceived as a central way of gaining status and privilege.

Qualitative studies of school aged boys have also revealed the difficulties that may occur for boys who are unable to live up to societal expectations of excellence in sport (Drummond, 2003; Embrey & Drummond, 1997; Gard & Meyenn, 2000; Swain, 2000, 2003). Failure to live up to expectations was found to impact on boys’ feelings about their bodies and themselves and presented challenges to their masculine identity that had to be resolved in other contexts. However, situational factors such as showering, swimming with members of the opposite sex and playing shirtless were also found to impact negatively on some boys’ feelings about themselves and their bodies.

Another recent study looked at primary school aged girls’ and boys’ behaviour in the context of school yard games of handball. The researchers argue that expressions of physicality are fluid and changeable and are influenced by and reflect not only gender issues, but also ethnicity, social class, cultural and institutional frameworks (Evaldsson, 2003). In this European study, many of the girls used strong, forceful and space occupying body movements, both in same and cross-sex games of handball. They engaged in games of handball and physical activity in ways that

displayed use of force, competitiveness and conflict, particularly if they had high levels of skill. Their play and movement also showed co-operation and friendship. However, both the girls and the boys challenged and manipulated expected gendered behaviours (Evalsson, 2003). More research is needed to understand children's gendered behaviour in the context of physical activity and their everyday lives. Study 2 offers a more in depth exploration of young peoples' lived experiences of their bodies, taking into account broader influences such as context.

Summary

The impact of socialisation on girls and boys, women and men is complex. When the various aspects of socialisation are considered it is not surprising that girls and women participate less in physical activity than boys and men. Fredrickson and Harrison (2005) warn that "to the extent that our culture socializes girls to self-objectify and overvalue appearance, we may also be socialising them to be both physically ineffective (as demonstrated here) and physically inactive" (p.93). The same principal might be applied to boys in a culture of increasing objectification.

Qualitative and quantitative studies from psychological and cultural studies as well as from feminist perspectives have been used to explore the impact of socialization, particularly on the lives and experiences of adolescent and adult women. Lived experiences and gendered negotiations have been explored in many elite level female athletes participating in traditionally male physical activities. Given the importance of childhood experiences, this study attempts to fill an existing gap in knowledge by exploring many of these same issues in pre-adolescent and adolescent children of both genders. This thesis pays careful attention to any developmental issues as well as experiences of negotiation and contradiction by employing various frameworks including that of performative gender and self-objectification.

The Current Studies

Rationale

The two studies in this thesis and the interpretations of findings are strongly informed by the social constructivist, cultural studies and feminist research frameworks explored throughout the literature review. The quantitative and qualitative studies in this thesis are designed to explore gender and age differences in young people's perceptions and experiences of their physical bodies, many of which have not been considered in the same way previously. Using psychological assessment measures that have arisen largely out of feminist research, Study 1 will provide a detailed quantitative understanding of the experiences of self-objectification, sociocultural attitudes to appearance and physical self-concept in young people and how this may vary with gender and between different age groupings. Study 1 will also consider the important relationships between these concepts and participation in physical activity, many of which present as a new application of these well established measures.

Aims

The overall aim of study 1 is to examine the ways in which young people view their physical bodies, taking into account participation in physical activity. The study will explore consistency with existing research and extend the literature by gaining a broader understanding of:

1. Physical self-concept in young people between the ages of 8 and 18 years;
2. The extent to which young people between the ages of 8 and 18 years understand and ascribe to societal ideals regarding physical appearance, in particular, thinness for girls and muscularity for boys,

3. The extent to which young people between the ages of 8 and 18 years self-objectify, by viewing their bodies in relation to functional attributes versus appearance based attributes.

This study will also explore gender and differences between age groups in these constructs as well as examining the relationships between physical self-concept, socio-cultural attitudes to appearance, self-objectification and other important variables such as participation in physical activity and body-mass-index (BMI).

The first study employs quantitative methods to explore these issues using valid and reliable questionnaires: the Physical Self Perception Profile – Child and Youth version (PSPP-CY), the Sociocultural Attitudes to Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ), the Self Objectification Questionnaire (SOQ), the Adolescent Physical Activity Recall Questionnaire (APARQ) and the World Health Organisation's Physical Activity Questionnaire. These questionnaires are outlined in greater detail in the methodology section that follows.

The second study uses a unique qualitative method to provide a deeper understanding of the issues and how they are experienced, expressed and negotiated in the everyday lives of young people. The study uses drawing to engage young people in a discussion about their experiences and feelings about their bodies. The study also examines the impact of gender and ageing on young people experiences of their bodies and their responses to divergent and complex situations.

Hypotheses

Consideration of the previous literature and an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of this area of research make a number of hypotheses possible, even when this study examines new relationships.

Participation in Physical Activity

Previous studies suggest that, on average, boys participate in adequate physical activity more than girls in all developmental age groups (e.g., Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003a, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003b; Hagger et al., 1998; Hickman et al., 2000; Riddoch et al., 2004; Roberts et al., 2004). This same finding is expected in the current research. Participation in sufficient levels would also be expected to decrease with age for both genders in accordance with previous research (e.g., Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003a; Roberts et al., 2004; Sallis, 1993; Strauss et al., 2001).

Physical Self-Concept

Gender differences in physical self-concept scores favouring boys have been consistently, though not unanimously, reported by previous studies using both the PSPP-CY and other measures of physical self-concept (e.g., Crocker et al., 2000; Hagger, Biddle, & Wang, 2005; Klomsten, Skaalvick & Espnes, 2004; Welk & Eklund, 2005). A similar gender pattern was anticipated with boys expected to score more highly, on average, than girls on measures of physical self-concept using the PSPP-CY in this study.

Expected age group differences are not as predictable. Age differences found in previous research have shown the effect to be small and authors have questioned the meaningfulness of these findings (Hagger, et al., 2005; Klomsten et al., 2004). Developmental differences were more likely to be revealed in the current study due to its inclusion of children aged 8 to 18 years as opposed to previous studies which have examined narrower developmental ranges (Hagger et al., 2005). Examination of children's scores on the PSPP-CY represents a relatively new application of the PSPP-CY and enables comparisons between children in late childhood through to later

adolescence. It was anticipated that if age group differences were present, scores on the PSPP-CY would decrease with age consistent with earlier research (Hagger et al., 2005).

Physical Activity and Physical Self-Concept

Previous studies have also demonstrated significant differences between the physical self-concept scores of young people who participate in various levels of physical activity. A positive correlational relationship has been found, with young people who participate in higher levels of physical activity having increased physical self-concept scores on most domains (Crocker et al., 2000; Hagger et al., 1998; Raudsepp, Libik & Hannus, 2002; Welk & Eklund, 2005). The current study expects to reveal the same relationships between physical self-concept and participation in physical activity.

A relationship between BMI (BMI) and physical self-concept scores was anticipated based on earlier studies. In particular, it was expected that increased BMI would be associated with lower scores on the various scales of the PSPP-CY, excluding physical strength (Raustorp et al., 2005). This pattern of findings was expected to be revealed particularly in the girls' data and would be consistent with previous research which has demonstrated that BMI is strongly related to general body dissatisfaction in girls (Blowers et al., 2003, Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001; Raustorp et al., 2005; Sands & Wardle, 2003; Stice, 1998).

While a range of relationships may exist between subscale scores of the PSPP-CY and other scales, the ones of most interest to this study will be outlined. A particular focus will be on those that represent new applications of these instruments and their underlying theories.

Previous research indicates that many of the PSPP-CY scales should correlate significantly with each other. In particular, strong relationships were expected between global self-esteem and physical self-worth and also between body attractiveness and both physical self-concept and global self-esteem (e.g., Boiven, Vitaro, & Gagnon, 1992; Bracken, 1992; Burnett, 1994; Fox, 1997; Mendelson & White, 1985; Raustorp et al., 2005). These hypotheses reflect the strong relationship proposed between physical attractiveness and young peoples' overall self-esteem and physical self-concept.

Self-Objectification

Gender differences were expected to be found in the tendency to self-objectification as measured by the SOQ, with girls on average expected to score more highly, reflecting greater self-objectification, than the boys. Although this study represents a unique application of this tool in its use with boys of these ages, previous studies have consistently shown that men tend to score lower on this measure than women (Fredrickson et al., 1998; Hebl et al., 2004; Tiggemann and Kuring, 2004).

Although this measure had not previously been used with children in the youngest age groups, it was expected that age group differences would be evident. These groups were expected to score the lowest results and the older groups the highest on this measure of self-objectification. This developmental finding is consistent with earlier studies which have shown older adolescents to exhibit higher rates of self-objectification than younger adolescents (Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003).

Sociocultural Attitudes to Appearance

Gender differences in young people's awareness of and ascription to societal ideals regarding appearance were not examined as this scale has a male and female version which does not share the same underlying factor structure (Smolak et al., 2001). The female version pertains to a girl's awareness of and ascription to, societal ideals of thinness while the male version taps similar attributes towards muscularity.

The few studies that have examined developmental differences in socio-cultural attitudes to appearance have produced inconsistent results. For example, in their study of 9 to 12 year old girls, Sands and Wardle (2003) found that awareness of socio-cultural attitudes to appearance (thinness) increased with age, while no significant increases were noted in internalisation of these same ideals. However, in their sample of six to 12 year old girls and boys, Murnen, Smolak, Mills and Good (2003) reported no significant age differences in responses to either internalisation or awareness of socio-cultural attitudes to appearance scales. The study reported in this thesis included a broader developmental window including young people aged between eight and 18 years, allowing examination of young people from late childhood through to late adolescence. This wider developmental range was expected to better reveal age-related differences if they were present, with the older adolescents expected to, on average, show greater awareness and internalization of socio-cultural attitudes to appearance than the younger children.

Socio-Cultural Attitudes to Appearance and BMI

Relationships between socio-cultural attitudes to appearance and young people's BMI have also been demonstrated in 11 to 14 year old girls (Smolak et al., 2001). For boys a weak relationship has been demonstrated between internalization of socio-cultural attitudes to muscularity and BMI, but not for awareness of this attitude

(Smolak et al., 2001). Smolak et al.'s (2001) study focused on scale development and reflected little on the reasons for these findings. However, their results may reflect the importance of a thin appearance to girls, in general, and how non-conformity with societal ideals through increased BMI might simultaneously impact on girls' awareness and internalization of these attitudes and beliefs. In this study it is anticipated that increased adoption of the muscularity ideal, coupled with increasing weight, may reflect boys who are actually physically embodying this ideal, thus increasing their BMI. Conversely, awareness ideals could be relatively unaffected by the boys BMI.

Physical Self-Concept and Self-Objectification

Although not previously investigated, various relationships were also anticipated between physical self-concept and self-objectification based on an understanding of the underlying theoretical underpinnings for each of the scales used and previous research in related areas. For example, it was anticipated that the tendency for increased self-objectification would be associated with decreasing scores on several domains of physical self-concept, in particular the global self-esteem, body attractiveness and physical self-worth. This was expected because those who self-objectify more tend to view their physical self-concept in terms of the importance of their bodies' appearance as opposed to its functionality (Strelan et al., 2003; Miner-Rubino et al., 2002).

Physical Self-Concept and Socio-Cultural Attitudes to Appearance

Although relationships between aspects of physical self-concept and socio-cultural attitudes to appearance have not been explored by past research, it was expected that increasing internalization of socio-cultural attitudes to appearance would be associated with decreased physical self-concept, particularly body

attractiveness, global self-esteem and physical self-worth. It was anticipated that those young people who ascribed more highly to society's dominant beliefs regarding to thinness or muscularity would be less likely to feel satisfied with themselves or their bodies. This would be in keeping with previous findings on body dissatisfaction and exposure to idealised (thin) images of women (Grosz, Levine, and Murnen, 2002). Poor body esteem in girls has also been associated with increasing socio-cultural attitudes to appearance internalization and awareness scores (Murnen et al., 2003; Smolak et al., 2001). This relationship was expected to be particularly evident for girls, for whom ideals about thinness are more pervasive compared to the ideals about muscularity held by boys in the current cultural climate. Murnen et al. (2003) found a weaker relationship between SATAQ scores and body esteem for boys compared to the results for girls, which may reflect the stronger internalisation and awareness by girls.

Self-Objectification and Socio-Cultural Attitudes to Appearance

Relationships between socio-cultural attitudes to appearance and self-objectification have not previously been explored. However, based on the theory underlying each of these scales, several significant relationships were expected. For example, increasing self-objectification was expected to be associated with increasing internalisation of socio-cultural attitudes of appearance for both girls and boys as the internalisation scale measures individual's internalisation of socio-cultural ideals of muscularity for boys and thinness for girls. These ideals have a strong basis in physical appearance and, as such, would be expected to be associated with self-objectification.

Summary of Hypotheses

The hypotheses for Study 1 can be summarised as followed:

1. On average boys are expected to participate in adequate levels of physical
2. Boys are expected to report higher scores on average on physical self-concept than are girls.
3. It is expected that significant differences between age groupings/age will occur on measures of physical self-concept, with physical self-concept on average, decreasing with increased age grouping/age.
4. Those who in participate in adequate levels of physical activity are also hypothesised to score, on average, more highly than those who don't participate in adequate levels of physical activity.
5. Girls are expected to score on average more highly on the SOQ than are boys, demonstrating higher levels of self-objectification. This is expected to be true in each of the age groupings/age.
6. The youngest age grouping/age is expected to score, on average, the lowest on the subscales of the SATAQ with increasing scores occurring with increasing age. This is anticipated for both the boys and the girls in the study.

A number of correlational relationships are also predicted. Positive correlational relationships are expected to be found between:

7. Subscales of the PSPP-CY.
8. BMI and SATAQ internalisation, awareness and total for girls.
9. BMI and SATAQ internalisation for boys.
10. Self-objectification and internalisation SATAQ.

Negative correlational relationships are expected to be found between:

11. BMI and PSPP-CY (except the strength subscale for boys).
12. Global self-esteem, body attractiveness and physical self-worth and self-objectification.
13. Global self-esteem, body attractiveness and physical self worth and the internalisation scale of the SATAQ.

CHAPTER 3: STUDY 1

Introduction

Study 1 uses valid and reliable questionnaires to provide a quantitative exploration of the gender and developmental differences in young people's perceptions and experiences of their physical bodies as it pertains to self objectification, socio-cultural attitudes to appearance and physical self-concept. This study also examines the important relationships between these concepts and participation in physical activity.

Study 1 builds upon the existing literature by examining physical self concept and its nature in a broader developmental range than has been considered previously. The inclusion of pre-adolescent children in the study offers a unique developmental perspective, not usually considered in previous research. The inclusion of boys in study 1 is also important given the changing experiences of boys in society and the increasing objectification of boys in the media.

The aims of study 1 include the examination of (a) physical self concept in young people between the ages of 8 and 18 years; (b) the extent to which young girls between the ages of 8 and 18 years understand and ascribe to societal ideals regarding thinness and the extent to which young boys of the same ages understand and ascribe to societal ideals regarding muscularity; (c) self objectification in young girls and boys. This study also explores gender and age group differences in these constructs and the relationships that occur with other important variables such as participation in physical activity and BMI.

Method

Participants

Participants were 139 primary and high school students from three independent schools in the Hunter Region of New South Wales. The students ranged in ages from 8 to 18 years ($M = 12.8$, $SD = 2.38$). In order to examine and compare developmental differences, participants were divided into three age groupings:

8 to 10 year olds - 17 boys ($M = 9.7$ years, $SD = 0.71$) and 20 girls ($M = 9.7$ years, $SD = 0.76$),

11 to 14 year olds - 43 boys ($M = 13.2$, $SD = 1.12$) and 32 girls ($M = 12.9$, $SD = 1.02$), and

15 to 18 year olds - 11 boys ($M = 16.2$, $SD = 0.98$) and 16 girls ($M = 16.1$, $SD = 0.76$).

The rationalisation for these age groupings can be found in the literature review in the section - defining childhood, early and late adolescence. Overall, 71 girls and 68 boys participated in the study.

Invitations were extended to all children within the selected schools who fell within the designated age ranges. Parental consent was received from 166 families reflecting a return rate (and student participant rate) of 10.4%.

Materials

Five questionnaires were administered in this study (see Appendices A- H). The first two of these, a demographic questionnaire and a physical activity questionnaire, were sent home to parents along with plain language information and consent forms. Parents/guardians were asked to complete these questionnaires with

their child/ren. The remaining questionnaires examined physical self-perceptions, self-objectification and socio-cultural attitudes to appearance, and were administered to the students in their school settings.

Demographic Questions

Student participants and their parents were initially asked to collaboratively complete a demographic questionnaire which collected information regarding their child's age, gender, class at school, height and weight as well as information about their ethnic background (see Appendix A). BMI (BMI), a ratio of weight (kg) to height (metre²), was calculated for each student participant. Students were then classified into one of four weight divisions using the Centre for Disease Control BMI-for-age data (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2007). Children with BMI's-for-age at or above the 95th percentile were classified as overweight. Those with BMI's-for-age between the 85th and 95th percentiles were classified as at risk for overweight. Those between the 5th and 85th percentiles were classified as normal weight, while children with BMI's below the 5th percentile were classified as underweight (CDC, 2007).

Physical Activity Questionnaires

A measure of physical activity was obtained from all participants using data gained from two questionnaires - the Physical Activity Recall Questionnaire (APARQ) (Booth, Okely, Chey & Bauman, 2002) and the World Health Organisation's questions on physical activity obtained from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study (Roberts et al., 2004)(see Appendices B & C). The APARQ collects data about the frequency, duration and intensity of student's participation in organised and non-organised sports, games and other physical activities across usual weeks in both summer and winter school terms. Organised

sports could include activities such as club or school netball, touch football, or swimming. Non-organised sports, games and other physical activities included activities such things as recreational games of football, walking to and/or from school, jumping on the trampoline, 'tips' and other incidental forms of physical activity. Responses were used to calculate a metabolic equivalent task score (MET score), a measure of energy expenditure, based on the activities selected (Ainsworth et al., 1993; Ainsworth et al., 2000). The APARQ has demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity (Booth, Okely, Chey & Bauman, 2002).

Although originally designed to be administered to students in small groups, this study adapted the APARQ protocol to construct a proxy version that was sent to the students' parents with a request that each student work with a parent to complete the questionnaire. Parental assistance was considered necessary because of the complexity of the information required (see Appendix B). The adaptation was made to address possible literacy difficulties in younger participants. A similar adaptation was employed by O'Conner et al., (2003) who also used a proxy version, completed by participants' parents, to collect physical activity data about children as young as six years of age. The use of a proxy version of the APARQ with the children in this study was considered an acceptable procedural adaptation by the author of the APARQ, Dr Michael Booth (personal communication, March 13, 2005).

The initial return rates for the APARQ data from participants at the first two participating schools were low (3% at School One and 7% at School Two). The researchers felt that the amount of information required and the time needed to complete the questionnaire may have contributed to the poor return rates. As a result, an alternative and much shorter method of seeking physical activity data was used

during the mail-out to the second school and in all subsequent mail-outs. A return rate of 8% was received from School Two when the alternative physical activity measure was employed.

The World Health Organization's Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study (Roberts et al., 2004) used two questions to determine physical activity levels in young people by collecting data related to the frequency and duration of participation in moderate to strenuous intensity physical activity (see Appendix C). The first question asked participants for the number of days during the previous week in which moderate to strenuous physical activity was participated in for at least 60 minutes. The second question asked for the same data based on a typical or usual week. In the HBSC questionnaire physical activity is defined as "any activity that increases your heart rate and makes you get out of breath some of the time" (Roberts et al., 2004: *p.*91). The HBSC questions demonstrate acceptable reliability and validity in adolescent samples (Booth et al., 2001) and have been used extensively by World Health Organisation researchers in over 34 countries.

Although originally designed to be administered directly to students in a school setting, the questionnaire asked this study's participants and their parents to complete the questions together at home. This was done to maximise the accuracy of the data and to minimize any difficulties attributable to literacy. Parents and students were provided with written instructions for completing the questionnaire.

In total, 62 students completed the APARQ and 77 students completed the HBSC questionnaires. Using comparable physical activity data on frequency, duration and intensity from both questionnaires, participants in this study were classified as

either adequately physically active (active) or not adequately physically active (inactive) based on the physical activity guidelines recommended by Prochaska, Sallis and Long (2001). Participants classified as active were those who had participated in at least five sessions of 60 minutes duration of moderate to strenuous physical activity in a week. Participants who did not meet these criteria were classified as inactive.

Socio-Cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ) – Revised Version

The SATAQ (Heinberg, Thompson & Stormer, 1995; Smolak et al., 2001) was developed originally for use with college-aged women to assess awareness of and attitudes towards, socio-cultural images of thinness. The version used in the current study is the adaptation of the SATAQ by Smolak, Levine and Thompson (2001), who modified the questioning format of the SATAQ in order to make it more appropriate for participants in the sixth and seventh grades of school. According to Smolak and colleagues (2001), the modified assessment shows a similar factor structure to the original version. In addition, these authors developed a male version of the SATAQ assessing boys' awareness of and attitudes towards socio-cultural images of muscularity. Sound internal consistency was demonstrated for both the girls' and boys' versions of the assessment (Smolak et al., 2001) (see Appendix D & E).

The female and male versions of the SATAQ each contain 14 items that are answered using a 5-point scale ranging from 'very true' to 'really not true'. Both the female and male versions of the questionnaire contain two subscales: awareness and internalisation. The awareness subscale assesses the extent to which individuals are aware of the prevailing socio-cultural views on that aspect of body image under scrutiny (i.e., thinness for females, muscularity for males). The internalization subscale measures the extent to which individuals have accepted that ideal for

themselves. Scores for the awareness and internalisation subscales are calculated by totalling responses to items that make up that scale (There are eight items for girls and seven items for boys on the internalisation scale and six items for girls and four items for boys on the awareness scale). Higher scores on the two subscales are thought to reflect higher levels of internalisation and awareness of socio-cultural ideals about thinness for girls or muscularity for boys. Lower scores are thought to reflect those who are less aware of socio-cultural ideals of thinness/muscularity and who personally have ascribed less to these ideals. In addition to subscale scores, a total SATAQ score is calculated from the sum of scores on all 14 items.

Internal consistency, convergent validity and reproducible factor structures have been demonstrated for both the modified female and male versions of the SATAQ when used with college and adolescent-aged participants (Heinberg, et al., 1995; Smolak et al., 2001). More recent studies with children have also demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency with children as young as six years of age (Blowers et al., 2003; Murnen et al., 2003; Sands & Wardle, 2003).

Self-Objectification Questionnaire

Based on self-objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and the Body Esteem Scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984), the Self-Objectification Questionnaire (SOQ) (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998) “assesses the extent to which individuals view their bodies in visually observable, appearance based (objectified) terms versus non-observable, competency based (non-objectified) terms (*p.*628). Participants are each required to rank 10 bodily attributes according to their importance to the individual's self-concept. The SOQ includes five items that are based on physical appearance (physical attractiveness, weight, sex appeal, measurements and firm/sculpted

muscles) and five items that are based on physical competency (muscular strength, physical coordination, health, physical fitness and physical energy level) (see Appendix F).

The self-objectification score is obtained by giving the top ranked attribute a score of nine and the bottom ranked attribute a score of zero. The scores of the five competence based attributes are totalled, as are the five appearance based attributes scores. The sum of the competence based attributes are then subtracted from the sum of the appearance based attributes, producing a score that ranges between -25 and +25. Higher scores reflect the greater importance of appearance and thus higher levels of self-objectification. Lower scores represent individuals who place greater importance on competence and/or functionality and thus experience lower levels of self-objectification.

Several studies have confirmed the validity of the SOQ (Noll, 1996; Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001). The SOQ has been shown to correlate highly with other similar measures (Appearance Anxiety Questionnaire and Body Image Assessment) while tapping into different aspects of body image satisfaction (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998). Although originally designed for and predominantly used with female college students, the SOQ has more recently been used with both male and female participants (e.g., Hebl et al., 2004; Fredrickson et al., 1998; Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004) and with participants between the ages of 10 and 81 years of age (Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001).

In the current study, while the individual rank items of the SOQ remained unchanged, the presentation of the measure to participants and the language used was modified slightly so as to be more developmentally appropriate for the age groups under consideration, particularly the youngest participants (see Appendix F). For

example, the item 'health' was changed to 'being healthy'. Further, in the original questionnaire participants ranked each attribute using a letter to denote importance. Because of the age and cognitive abilities of the youngest participants in the current study, an alternative method was used to simplify the ranking process. Participants were provided with stickers with the numbers '1' to '10' printed on them. One denoted the item of greatest importance to them and 10 the item of least importance. Participants placed one sticker next to each item on the scale according to its relative value to their physical self-concept. These values were then converted to the appropriate scores between zero and nine for computations. None of these minor modifications were expected to alter the validity of the questionnaire.

Physical Self-Perception Profile for Children (PSPP-CY)

The PSPP-CY is a 30 item multidimensional questionnaire designed to examine an individual's physical self-perceptions and self-concept (see Appendix G) (Welk et al., 1995; Whitehead, 1995). Based on early research by Harter (1985, 1986) and Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976), the questionnaire is designed to measure physical self-concept from the global domain to the more specific aspects of the physical self, in line with the hierarchical view of self-concept development (as discussed previously in the literature review) (Shavelson et al., 1976).

The questionnaire employs alternative forced-choice questions designed to reduce social desirability influences (Harter, 1982). The respondent first selects the response that best fits the perception they hold of themselves, and then indicates the extent to which the response is true for them (from 'sort of true' through to 'really true').

The PSPP-CY contains six subscales (each with six items). One scale measures overall physical self-worth (PSW) while a further four scales focus on more specific aspects of the physical self-concept, including sport competence (SC), body attractiveness (BA), physical condition (PC) and physical strength (PS). Finally, a six-item measure of global self-worth (GSW) is also embedded in the questionnaire (Rosenberg, 1979). Descriptions on each of these scales and subscales is presented in Table 1 (Fox, 1997, *p.*41). High scores on any subscale are indicative of positive self-perceptions while low scores are indicative of more negative self-perceptions.

The psychometric properties of the PSPP have been thoroughly examined. It has demonstrated strong factorial validity (Fox & Corbin, 1989; Sonstroem, Speliotis, & Fava, 1992; Welk et al., 1995). It has also demonstrated good internal reliability and stability (Fox & Corbin, 1989; Welk et al., 1995).

Table 1

Descriptions of the PSPP-CY Subscales (Fox, 1997)

Subscale	Description
Sport	Athletic ability, ability to learn sport, confidence in sport
Condition	Physical condition, stamina, fitness, ability to maintain exercise, confidence in the exercise setting
Body	Attractive physique, ability to maintain an attractive body, confidence in appearance
Strength	Perceived strength, muscle development, confidence in situations requiring strength
Physical Self-Worth	General feelings of pride, satisfaction, happiness and confidence in the physical self
Global Self-Worth	General feelings (positive or negative) of the self

Researchers have noted that young participants may require assistance in understanding the response categories of the PSPP, so, with them in mind, the investigators developed the children/youth version (PSPP-CY) (Eklund et al., 1997; Whitehead, 1995). It was modified for use with children as young as eight years of age (Welk & Eklund, 2005) and has been used with young people across many nationalities (e.g., Canadian, British, Hong Kong, Australian, Russian, Turkish etc.) (Biddle, Page, Ashford, Jennings, Brooke & Fox, 1993; Hagger et al., 1998; Whitehead, 1995). All versions have demonstrated a similar factorial structure to the original PSPP and have good construct validity (Ekland, Whitehead & Welk, 1997; Hagger et al., 2005; Welk et al., 1995; Welk & Eklund, 2005; Whitehead, 1995). The PSPP-CY has been found to be an excellent predictor of high and low physical activity in children (Hagger et al., 1998).

Procedure

The data for study 1 was collected in two settings. In the first instance consent to participate, physical activity and demographic questionnaires were completed by parents and children in the home setting. The children who had parental consent were given the remaining questionnaires at school, in small groups. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher.

Home Setting

In the first instance, questionnaire packages were sent out to parents of all students in the appropriate age ranges at selected schools via an existing school mail-out. Each package included an information letter outlining the details of the study for adults (see Appendix H) and for children (Appendix I), a parental consent form (see Appendix J), a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) and a Physical Activity

questionnaire (see Appendix B and C). Because of the young age of some students, parents were asked to complete these questionnaires in collaboration with their children.

Parents/guardians who consented to their children's participation in the study returned the signed consent forms and completed questionnaires either to a designated box in their schools office area or via supplied reply paid envelopes to the researchers. In each school a second mail-out (and in one school a third) of reminder notices encouraged participants to return their questionnaires.

School Setting

Students whose parents provided consent were identified and invited to participate in completing the remaining questionnaires - the SATAQ, PSPP-CY and the SOQ. School staff arranged times for group administration of the questionnaires. The students provided informed assent (in addition to the parental consent already obtained) prior to administration of the questionnaires (see Appendix K), which was done by the researcher during a regular school day, at times convenient to the school.

Questionnaires were administered in same sex groupings with only the researcher present. Groups sizes were kept small (up to 10 students for the youngest age group, 12 students for the middle age group, and 18 students for the oldest group) to enable the younger participants to receive assistance as required.

To ensure students' comprehension of both the tasks and questionnaires and to cater for different levels of literacy across age groups, all information sheets, consent forms and questionnaires were presented verbally, as well as in written form, to all students. Based on feedback from pilot testing, students in all age groups were provided with visual prompts and examples for each of the questionnaires in order to assist in their understanding of the tasks.

The administration and completion of the questionnaires in the school setting took approximately 30- 40 minutes per small group, varying somewhat with the ages and abilities of the students.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences for Window (SPSS Version 12.0) was used to analyse all data from this study. SPSS was used to produce descriptive data for the demographic factors as well as to explore visually, gender and age group differences in participation in physical activity, physical self-concept, socio-cultural attitudes to appearance and self-objectification scores. Histograms and scatter plots were produced to facilitate the visual examination of the data and to indicate the normality of the distribution, identify outliers and highlight any other anomalies. Analysis of the data included MANOVA, chi square analysis, and one-way ANOVAs to examine differences between males and females and different age groups. When MANOVA was used a model building approach was used. A full factorial model was used as the first step, considering all the possible main effects and interactions. Then a process of backward elimination occurred to remove the non-significant effects starting with the most complex. Multivariate statistics were used to decide which terms to remove in this process.

Assumptions about residuals including the normality of distributions and constancy in variance were also checked. An alpha level of .05 was used throughout the analysis to determine findings of significance. Due to the extensiveness of the analyses conducted, the results of non-significant findings have not been reported as they are numerous and would hinder readability. Measures of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) were calculated for the PSPP-CY and SATAQ.

Results

Study 1 – Preliminary Analyses

Cronbach's Alpha

As the SATAQ has only been used minimally with younger age groups, Cronbach's alpha was calculated as a measure of internal reliability. For girls, scores of .88 and .62 were obtained for the Internalisation and Awareness scales respectively. For boys, scores of .83 and .66 were obtained for these same scales. In general, alpha scores of .7 and above are considered acceptable (George & Mallery, 2003). However, scores as low as .6 or even .5 have been identified as acceptable for exploratory studies (Nunnally, 1978) or studies with novel subjects (Anderson, 1988; Ittner & Larcker, 1997).

Internal consistency was also acceptable on all scales of the PSPP-CY. Cronbach's alpha values for each of the PSPP-CY scales are presented in Table 2. Internal consistency was also high when data of the two genders was considered separately, also shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Internal Consistency Values (Cronbach's Alpha) for the PSPP-CY Scales

	Sport competence	Physical Condition	Body Attractiveness	Physical Strength	Physical Self- Worth	Global Self- Worth
Overall	.83	.91	.86	.89	.89	.86
Girls	.79	.91	.85	.92	.88	.87
Boys	.82	.89	.85	.86	.86	.82

Normality and Testing of Assumptions of the Data

During the analysis, several of Levene's tests for examining assumptions of equality of variance, reached statistical significance. Examination of the Level vs. Spread variance plots revealed that all differences were within a magnitude of 4 X and, therefore, were deemed not to be affecting the data significantly.

Normality of the distributions was also explored through examination of the residuals. Residual plots were studied using histograms, normality tests and Q-Q plots. Although normality tests were failed for all of the PSPP-CY scales except physical strength, inspection of the histograms and Q-Q plots revealed the skewness was not severe (slightly skewed to the left). Therefore, it was concluded that this would not impact on the statistical significance of the findings.

Demographic and Descriptive Characteristics

The study consisted of 139 participants. Fifty-one percent of participants were female and 49% were males. There were different numbers of participants in the various age groups. The 11 to 14 year age group was the most highly represented ($n = 75$), followed by the 8 to 10 years age group ($n = 37$), and then the 15 to 18 years age

group ($n = 27$). The proportion of males and females in each age group also varied. In the youngest and the oldest age groups, the numbers of girls was greater than the numbers of boys, while for the 11 to 14 years age group the pattern was reversed. This distribution is evident in Table 3 which presents participant numbers by age group.

In regard to ancestry, the participants were a relatively homogenous group with the majority citing either a solely Australian or English background (30.7%) or a mixed Australian/English background in combination with various other ancestries (46.1%). The majority of participants also identified Australia as their country of birth (92.1%). A small percentage of the sample identified themselves as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders (2.2%) while an even smaller percent (0.7%) failed to provide data relating to ancestry.

Table 3

Number of Boy and Girl Participants by Age Group

	Age Range	<i>n</i>	Mean Age	SD	% for age group (across genders)
Boys	8-10 years	17	9.69	0.71	45.9
	11-14 years	43	13.19	1.12	57.3
	15-18 years	11	16.22	0.98	40.7
Girls	8-10 years	20	9.73	0.76	54.1
	11-14 years	32	12.86	1.02	42.7
	15-18 years	16	16.1	0.76	59.3

Gender and Age Patterns in Weight Classifications

Participants were required to provide information regarding their height, weight and age. This data was used to calculate their Body Mass Indices (weight/height²) which were then converted into weight classifications according to the Centre for Disease Control BMI-for-age classification system (2007). The majority of participants were categorised as 'normal' weight (71.9%), with 10.1% categorised 'at risk of overweight', 3.6% as 'overweight' and 2.9% as 'underweight' (2.9%). Some 11.5% of participants failed to include some of the information required to make this classification.

A similar pattern of weight categorisation occurred for boys when gender groupings occurred; however, minor difference emerged for the girls. Categorisation by gender also revealed that boys were more highly represented than girls in the normal weight category. Girls were more often missing height/weight data than were boys. Table 4 contains the weight classification information presented according to gender grouping.

Chi Square analysis confirmed that boys were significantly more likely to be represented in the normal weight range than were girls (81.7% versus 61.8%) ($\chi^2(4, N=139) = 10.24, p = .025$). A Fisher's exact test was used as more than 20% of cells had an expected count of less than 5.

Table 4

Weight Classification According to Gender

Gender	Weight classification	<i>N</i>	%
Male	Underweight	1	1.40
	Normal	58	81.69
	At risk of overweight	6	8.45
	Overweight	3	4.23
	Missing data	3	4.23
Female	Underweight	3	4.41
	Normal	42	61.76
	At risk of overweight	8	11.76
	Overweight	2	2.95
	Missing data	13	19.12

Chi Square analysis also revealed that girls were significantly more likely to be represented in the missing weight classification data than males (19.1% versus 4.2%). The two youngest age groups of girls made up the largest proportions of missing data (approximately 69%). This result shows that girls in these two age groups were more likely to fail to include sufficient information about their height and/or weight, thus preventing a BMI from being calculated. These observations were not subject to further statistical analysis due to the small numbers in some cells. The missing weight classification data for age and gender are presented in Figure 2.

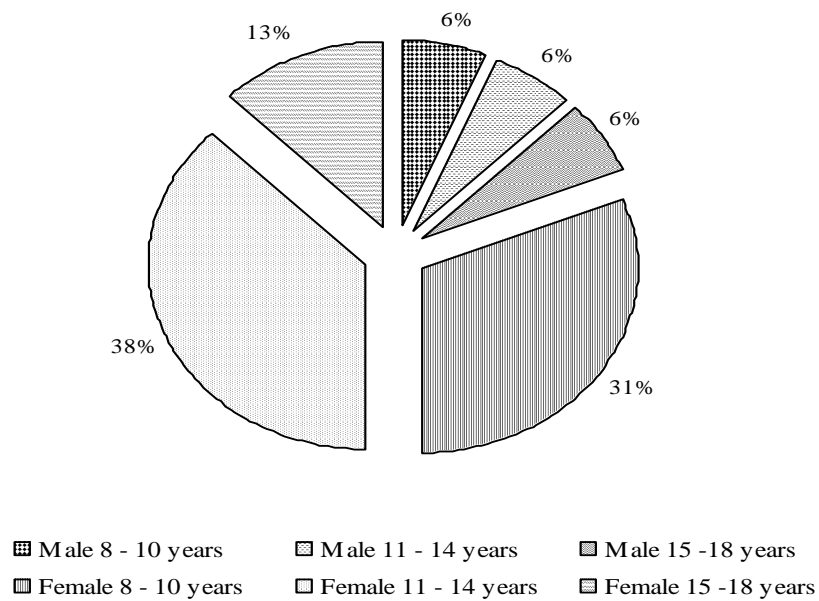


Figure 2. Missing weight classification data according to age and gender.

Weight classifications were also categorised by age group. The boys' data showed a similar pattern of classification to the overall data (see Table 5). The highest percentages of boys in all age groups were in the 'normal' weight classification range. Smaller proportions of boys fell into the 'at risk of overweight' category (8%), the 'overweight' category (4%), and the 'underweight' category (1%). For girls, smaller proportions of participants were identified in the 'normal' weight classification category except for the oldest age group. The next most frequent weight range classification for the youngest two age groups of girls was the 'at risk of overweight' categorisation. A small proportion of girls in the two youngest age groups were classified as underweight (see Table 5). The two youngest age groups also had the largest proportions of participants that were missing height and/or weight data. For both boys and girls, none of the participants in the oldest age groups indicated being underweight or overweight.

Table 5

Weight Classification According to Gender and Age Grouping

Gender	Age range	Under-Weight		Normal		At risk of over-weight		Over-weight		Missing data	
		%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Male	8 - 10 years	0	0	82.4	14	5.9	1	5.9	1	5.9	1
	11 - 14 years	2.3	1	83.7	36	7	3	4.7	2	2.3	1
	15 - 18 years	0	0	72.7	8	18.2	2	0	0	9.1	1
Female	8 - 10 years	5	1	50	10	15	3	5	1	25	5
	11 - 14 years	6.3	2	59.5	19	12.5	4	3.1	1	18.8	6
	15 - 18 years	0	0	81.3	13	6.3	1	0	0	12.5	2

*Study 1 – Hypothesis Testing***Gender and Age Patterns in Participation in Physical Activity**

In terms of physical activity, 54.7% of the sample was classified as adequately physically active, (physically active) leaving 43.9% classified as inadequately physically active (not physically active). Sufficient data was not provided to compute this classification in 1.4% of participants. Gender differences were apparent in the data. The youngest age group had the highest proportions of physically active participants for both boys and girls. The proportions of physically active participants decreased with increasing age. Across all three age groups more boys than girls were physically active. These findings are presented in Figure 3 which displays the percentages of boys and girls who were physical active according age group.

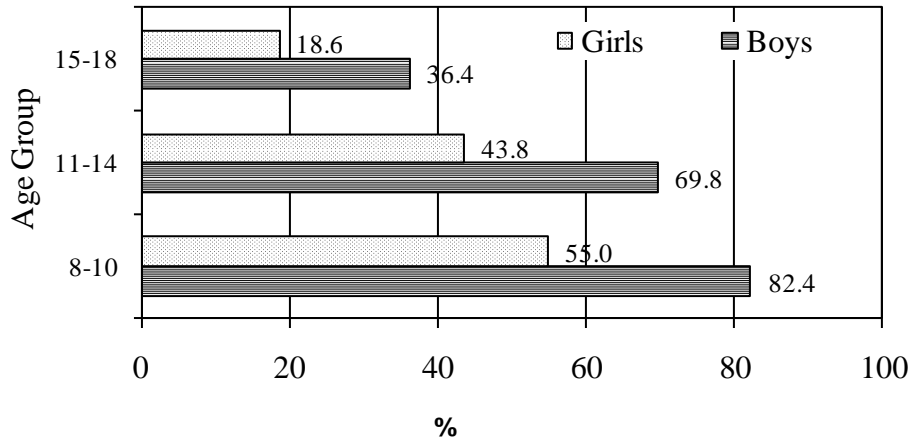


Figure 3. Percentages of physically active girls and boys by age group.

When this relationship was examined using Chi Square, a significant difference was found ($\chi^2(1, N=137) = 11.17, p = .001$). Overall, boys were found to be participating in adequate amounts of physical activity significantly more than were girls (69.6% versus 41.2% for boys and girls respectively), supporting the proposed hypothesis.

Physical Self-Concept

To address the hypothesis that boys are expected to report higher scores on average on physical self-concept than are girls with the prediction that this will be true for all of the age groupings examined, participants also completed the PSPP-CY, a measure of physical self-concept in children and young people. This scale contains five subscales relating to different aspects of physical self-concept and an additional subscale relating to global self-worth. These subscales are: physical self-worth, sport competence, body attractiveness, physical condition, physical strength and global self-worth. Possible scores for each subscale range between one and four, with higher scores representing more positive self-concept. Mean results for both boys and girls in

study 1 were towards the upper end of this range, suggesting that both boys and girls had relatively high physical self concept. Interpretations of findings have been considered in relation to this.

Examination of mean physical self-concept subscale scores separately for boys and girls revealed that, on average, boys scored more highly than girls on all scales of the PSPP-CY. This finding is represented in Figure 4.

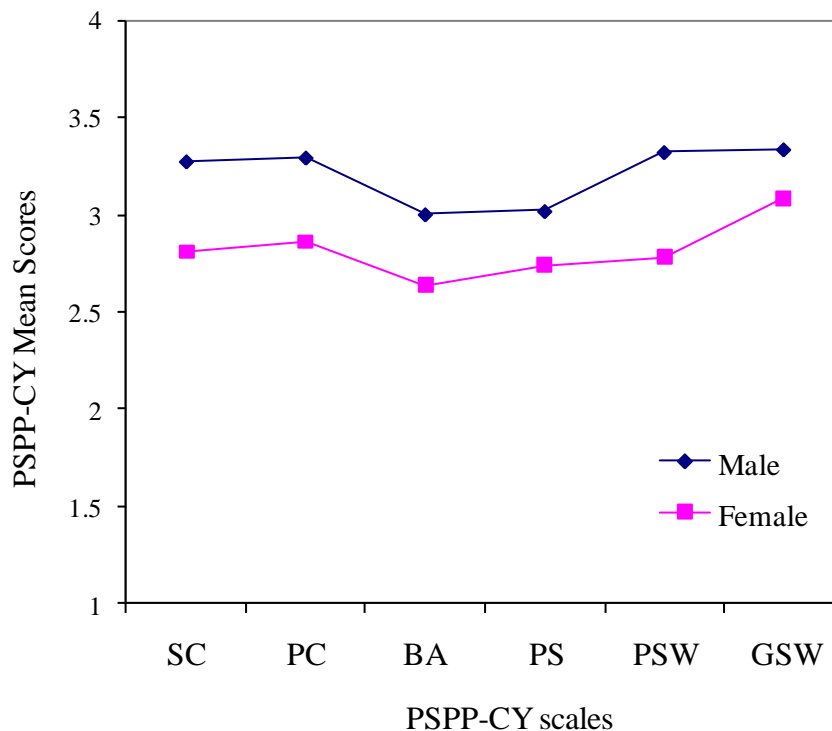


Figure 4. Girls' and boys' mean sport competence, physical condition, body attractiveness, physical strength, physical self-worth and global self-worth scores.

MANOVA was performed on the PSPP-CY data. Using a model building perspective all potentially important variables were included in the analysis. This included gender, age group, physical activity and weight class. The most complicated model was a full factorial model which contained four main effects, six 2-way interactions between all 4 variables, four 3-way interactions and one 4-way interactions. Then a process of backward elimination was followed to remove the non-

significant effects starting with the most complex, the 4-way interaction, then the 3-way interactions, then the 2-way interactions and finally any main effects.

Multivariate statistics were used to decide which terms to remove in this process.

The final model for the PSPP-CY was a MANOVA included only the main effects of gender (2), physical activity (2) and weight class (4). Gender (Wilks' Lambda = 0.871, $F(6, 110) = 2.71, p = 0.02$), weight class (Wilks' Lambda = 0.505, $F(18, 312) = 4.73, p < 0.001$), and physical activity level (Wilks' Lambda = 0.805, $F(6, 110) = 4.44, p < 0.001$) were all significant. No main effect was found for age group nor were any other interactions significant.

Examining the subscale measures revealed significant differences due to gender only for sport competence ($F(1, 115) = 6.32, p = 0.01$) and physical self-worth ($F(1, 115) = 7.24, p = 0.01$). Effect sizes (Cohen's d) were 0.7 and 0.8 both are large in size (see Table 6). The effect sizes for the remaining scales were all medium even though analysis did not reach statistical significance. Standard deviations ranged between 2.64 and 3.34. Figure 4 reveals that in both instances boys, on average, scored more highly than girls.

Table 6

Effect Sizes (Cohen's d) for Boys and Girls on the PSPP-CY Subscales

PSPP-CY Subscale	Cohen's d
Sport Competence	0.7
Physical Condition	0.6
Body Attractiveness	0.5
Physical Strength	0.4
Physical Self- Worth	0.8
Global Self-Esteem	0.4

In regards to weight class, significant differences were found for physical condition ($F(3, 115) = 3.63, p = 0.02$) and physical strength ($F(3, 115) = 4.87, p = 0.003$). Post hoc analysis (Tukey HSD, $p = .003$) revealed that on average young people classified as overweight scored significantly lower on the physical condition subscale ($M = 2.31$) than young people classified as in the normal range ($M = 3.2$). Post-hoc analysis on the latter finding did not reveal significant differences, probably due to the small sample sizes found in the underweight classification group ($n=4$). Means revealed that young people classified as overweight scored higher on the physical strength subscale ($M = 3.6$) on average than those classified as underweight ($M = 2.51$).

The failure to find a main effect for age group demonstrates that there was no significant differences between PSPP-CY subscale scores for the three different age groupings under examination. This finding provides little support for the proposed hypothesis. However, examination of effect sizes, found in Table 7, revealed a number of large and medium effect sizes. Large effect sizes were found for girls in the youngest age group compared to girls in the oldest age groups on the physical self-worth, sports competence, physical condition and physical strength subscales. Effect sizes on the remaining two scales were medium. The youngest girls were found to have higher, more positive scores on these scales than the oldest girls. Medium effect sizes were also found between the middle age group and the oldest age group on physical self-worth, physical competence, physical strength and general self-worth, with scores again favouring the younger age group over the older age group. A medium effect size was also found between the youngest age group and the middle age group. These findings suggest that age group may have been a factor for girls but

not for boys. Standard deviations for girls ranged between 0.43 and 0.82 between 0.46 and 0.76 for boys. Mean scores for each of the PPSP-CY scales according to age grouping for girls and boys are presented in Figures 5 and 6.

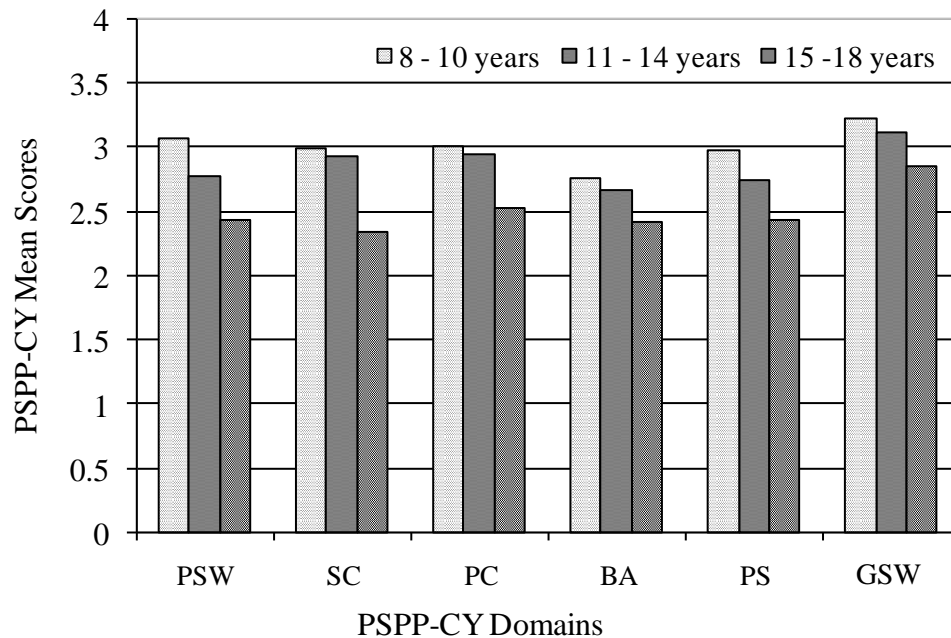


Figure 5: Mean physical self-worth, sport competence, physical condition, body attractiveness, physical strength and global self-worth scores for girls by age group.

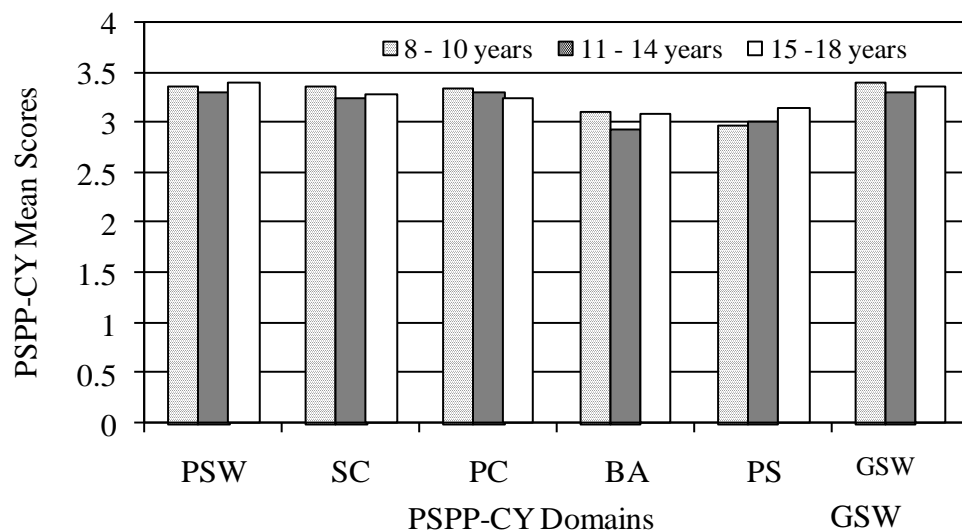


Figure 6. Mean physical self-worth, sport competence, physical condition, body attractiveness, physical strength and global self-worth scores for boys by age group.

Table 7

Effects Sizes for PSPP-CY Subscale Scores for Girls and Boys by Age Group

	8 – 10 years and 11 – 14 years		8 – 10 years and 15 – 18 years		11 – 14 years and 15 – 18 years	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Physical Self-Worth	0.5	0.1	0.9	0.1	0.4	0.2
Sports Competence	0.1	0.2	1.0	0.2	0.9	0
Physical Condition	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.2	0.6	0.1
Body Attractiveness	0.1	0.3	0.5	0	0.3	0.2
Physical Strength	0.3	0.1	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.2
General Self-Worth	0.2	0.1	0.6	0.1	0.4	0.1

In regards to physical activity level, significant differences were found between physical activity level and all of the PSPP-CY scales (sport competence($F(1, 115) = 14.75, p < 0.001$), physical condition ($F(1, 115) = 26.25, p < 0.001$), body attractiveness ($F(1, 115) = 4.48, p = 0.04$), physical strength ($F(1, 115) = 5.74, p = 0.05$), physical self-worth ($F(1, 115) = 10.11, p = 0.002$), global self-esteem ($F(1, 115) = 7.01, p = 0.009$). Effect sizes (Cohen's d) were 1.0 (large), 0.7 (large), 0.7 (large), 0.4 (medium), 0.8 (large) and 0.8 (large) respectively (see Table 8). Standard deviations ranged between 0.5 and 0.79. These results show that those who were physically active scored higher on each of the PSPP-CY domains, on average, than those who were not physically active. As hypothesised, physically active participants

scored significantly higher, on average, than those who were physically inactive in the various physical self-concept domains, indicating consistently higher physical self-concept.

Table 8

Effect Sizes for Active and Inactive Participants on the PSPP –CY Subscales

(Active $n = 74$, Inactive $n = 61$).

PSPP-CY Subscales	Effect size (Cohen's d)
Sport Competence	1.0
Physical Condition	0.7
Body Attractiveness	0.7
Physical Strength	0.4
Physical Self –Worth	0.8
Global Self-Worth	0.8

Although, a main effect for age was not found in the PSPP-CY data, a correlation analysis (Pearson's r) was conducted to examine the relationships between the various scales of the PSPP-CY and age on the pooled girls' and boys' data. Significant negative relationships were found between age and sport competence, physical condition and physical strength, revealing, that as age increased, scores on the PSPP-CY scales mentioned decreased (see Table 9). However, these relationships ranged from very weak to weak. The findings suggest that young peoples' physical self-concept in these areas decreases with age, although causality cannot be assumed.

Table 9

*Correlation Table for the PSPP-CY Scales, Age and BMI for Pooled Girls and Boys**Data*

	Age	BMI	Sport Competence	Physical Condition	Body Attractiveness	Physical Strength	Physical Self-Worth	Global Self- Worth
Age	-	-	-.22*	-.18*	-.11	-.17*	-.16	-.14
BMI	-	-	-.06	-.32**	-.28**	.18	-.19*	-.18*
Sport Competence	-	-	-	.69**	.50**	.49**	.64**	.49**
Physical Condition	-	-	-	-	.60**	.50**	.69**	.60**
Body Attractiveness	-	-	-	-	-	.49**	.81**	.71**
Physical Strength	-	-	-	-	-	-	.58**	.47**
Physical Self- Worth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.78**

*p<.05

**p<.01

Gender and Age Patterns in Self-Objectification

Mean self-objectification scores were also calculated for boys and girls in each of the age groups. Possible scores for individuals ranged between -25, indicating low self-objectification, and +25, indicating high self-objectification. The Self-Objectification Questionnaire (SOQ) does not have a cut-off or clinical range of scores, but rather differences are relative to each other and those found in previous studies.

Girls, on average, scored more highly than boys when the data from the three age groups were pooled (Girls $M = -11.95$, $SD = 11.01$, $n = 68$; Males $M = -16.03$, $SD = 8.48$, $n = 71$). ANOVA was performed on the SOQ. The main effect for gender was found to be significant ($F(1, 137) = 6.46$, $p = 0.01$). The effect size was close to medium (Cohen's $d = 0.4$). No other main effects were significant. This finding provides support for the hypothesis that girls would, on average, score higher in self-objectification than would the boys. Analysis revealed no support for the presence of age group differences which was contrary to hypothesised. Effect sizes were also calculated for this data but all were small in size (see Table 10). Standard deviations ranged between 8.14 and 9.31 for boys and between 9.81 and 12.04 for girls. Similarly, correlational analysis between age and SOQ scores did not reveal significant results.

Table 10

Effect Sizes for SOQ Scores for Girls and Boys by Age Group

	8 – 10 years and 11 – 14 years		8 – 10 years and 15 – 18 years		11 – 14 years and 15 – 18 years	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
SOQ	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1

Age Patterns in Socio-Cultural Attitudes to Appearance

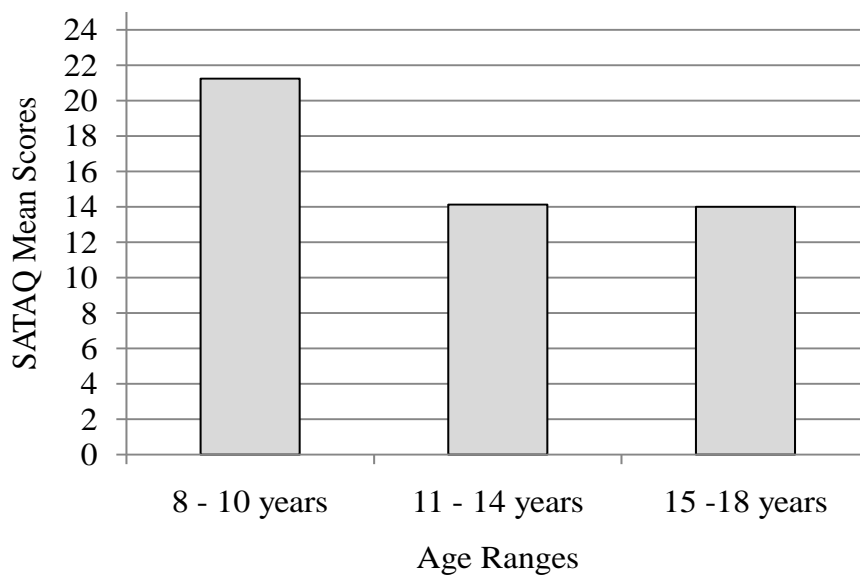
Like the SOQ, scores obtained on the SATAQ scale are relative and there is no cut-off point or clinical threshold. Increased scores on the SATAQ simply reflect relatively increasing endorsement of that particular quality, for example, increasing internalisation of socio-cultural attitudes to thinness.

MANOVA was also performed on the SATAQ data separately for boys and girls (as this measure has a different factor structure for the boys and girls versions of the questionnaire). For boys, a main effect was found for age group (Wilks' Lambda = 0.68, $F(4, 138) = 7.21$, $p < 0.001$). Further analysis of the subscales revealed significant differences between age group and internalisation ($F(2, 70) = 14.99$, $p < 0.001$) but not age group and awareness. Tukey HSD revealed significant differences between the youngest age group and the middle age grouping and the youngest age grouping and the oldest age groups on internalisation with the younger boys having, on average, the higher scores. This finding revealed that, on average, the youngest boys had higher levels of internalisation of socio-cultural attitudes to appearance as it related to muscularity, than the two older groups of boys. This is best represented in Figure 7. This finding was contrary to the hypothesis. The effect sizes (Cohen's d) for these two findings were large (1.5 and 1.6 respectively) (see Table 11). Standard deviations ranged between 1.96 and 8.34.

Table 11

Effect Sizes for SATAQ for Girls and Boys by Age Group

	8 – 10 years and 11 – 14 years		8 – 10 years and 15 – 18 years		11 – 14 years and 15 – 18 years	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Total	0.1	1.1	0	1.4	0	0.2
Awareness	0.6	0.5	0.2	1.1	0.2	0.5
Internalisation	0.2	1.5	0.1	1.6	0.1	0

*Figure 7. Mean SATAQ internalisation scores for boys.*

Correlation (Pearson's r) was also used to examine the relationship between age and SATAQ scores for the boys. Age was found to be significantly correlated with scores on the SATAQ internalisation scale and the SATAQ total scale ($r = -.46$, $n = 71$, $p < .001$ and $r = -.39$, $n = 71$, $p < .001$) while no significant relationships were found with the SATAQ awareness scale ($r = -.21$, $n = 71$, $p = .077$). A moderate strength negative relationship was found using the internalisation scale and a weak negative relationship was found using the total scale. These results show that total and internalisation of socio-attitudes to appearance scores as they pertained to muscularity, decreased with increasing age. The direction of this finding was contrary to that expected.

For girls, no significant main effects or interactions were found when MANOVA was conducted. The results suggest that girls in the different age groups did not differ from each other on the various measures of socio-cultural attitudes to appearance as it pertains to thinness. Correlational analysis between age and girls' SATAQ scores also failed to reveal significant relationships. Effect sizes are found in Table 11. Standard deviations ranged between 3.45 and 10.16.

Physical Self-Concept Subscales Inter-Relationships

A correlational analysis (Pearson's r) was used to examine relationships between subscales of the PSPP-CY. Previous research indicated that some subscales would be more strongly correlated than others. Examples include body attractiveness and physical self-worth. As expected, significant positive relationships were found between each of the subscales in the overall PSPP-CY data. The strength of these relationships varied from moderate (for example, between body attractiveness and physical strength) to very strong (for example, between body attractiveness and physical self-worth) (see Table 12). These relationships revealed that as scores on one

subscale increased, so did scores on the other subscale. Although it is not possible to determine causality, participants who had positive self-concepts in one area typically had positive self-concepts in other areas and vice versa.

Relationships between the PSPP-CY scales were also examined for each of the genders separately to see if the pattern of results was similar for boys and girls. As was the case overall, significant positive relationships were revealed between each of the PSPP-CY subscales for the boys' data (see Table 13). These relationships ranged from weak (for example, between physical condition and physical strength) to very strong (for example, between body attractiveness and physical self-worth). Except for the relationship between physical condition and physical strength, all relationships were significant at the .01 alpha level. The results consistently showed that as scores increased on one PSPP-CY scale, they also increased on the other PSPP-CY scale.

The pattern of results for the girls was similar. The strength of these relationships varied from weak (for example, between sport competence and global self-esteem) to strong (for example, between body attractiveness and physical self-worth) (see Table 13). For both the girls and the boys the strongest relationships were found between body attractiveness and physical self-worth (see Tables 13 & 14). Positive physical self-concept as it relates to body attractiveness was associated with correspondingly positive physical self-worth.

Table 12

Correlation Table for the PSPP-CY Scales, Age and BMI for Boys

	Age	BMI	Sport Competence	Physical Condition	Body Attractiveness	Physical Strength	Physical Self- Worth	Global Self- Worth
Age	-	.57**	-.09	-.09	.01	.03	.01	-.05
BMI	-	-	-.03	-.38**	-.17	.29*	-.09	-.12
Sport Competence	-	-	-	.71**	.53**	.38**	.63**	.57**
Physical Condition	-	-	-	-	.63**	.33**	.70**	.60**
Body Attractiveness	-	-	-	-	-	.53**	.81**	.69**
Physical Strength	-	-	-	-	-	-	.60**	.51**
Physical Self- Worth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.79**

*p<.05

**p<.01

Table 13

Correlation Table for the PSPP-CY Scales, Age and BMI for Girls

	Age	BMI	Sport Competence	Physical Condition	Body Attractiveness	Physical Strength	Physical Self- Worth	Global Self- Worth
Age	-	.40**	-.39**	-.31*	-.23	-.35**	-.35**	-.24
BMI	-	-	-.08	-.26	-.40**	.08	-.29*	-.24
Sport Competence	-	-	-	.61**	.38**	.54**	.55**	.36**
Physical Condition	-	-	-	-	.50**	.59**	.62**	.57**
Body Attractiveness	-	-	-	-	-	.35**	.78**	.70**
Physical Strength	-	-	-	-	-	-	.53**	.40**
Physical Self- Worth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.76**

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ **Physical Self-Concept and BMI**

The relationships between physical self-concept subscale scores and measures of BMI were expected to be significant as previous studies have found. Significant negative relationships were found between BMI and most of the PSPP-CY subscales except sport competence ((physical condition $r = -.32$, $N = 121$, $p = .001$); body attractiveness ($r = -.28$, $N = 121$, $p = .002$); physical self-worth ($r = -.19$, $N = 121$, $p = .036$); global self-esteem ($r = -.18$, $N = 121$, $p = .047$). The results revealed that as BMI increased, scores on the PSPP-CY subscales decreased. For these aspects of

physical self-concept, increased BMI was associated with poorer physical self concept. A weak positive relationship was found between BMI and the PSPP-CY subscale physical strength ($r = .18$, $N = 121$, $p = .044$) with higher scores on BMI associated with higher scores on the physical strength scale.

Unlike the overall data set, the relationships between boys' BMI were found to be significantly related only to scores on the physical condition and physical strength scales of the PSPP-CY (see Table 12). The relationship between BMI and physical condition was a weak one, with increasing BMI associated with decreasing scores in physical condition. Similarly, a weak positive relationship was shown between BMI and physical strength, indicating a relationship between increasing BMI and more positive physical strength scores, although causality cannot be assumed (see Table 12).

The girls' correlational data also indicated significant negative relationships between BMI and body attractiveness and physical self-worth. Although these were weak relationships, they showed that as BMI decreased, scores on such aspects of physical self-concept increased (see Table 13). Closer examination of these relationships using a scattergram and a Loess line of fit (75% of points of fit) showed that as BMI decreased, scores on these scales increased until a BMI of approximately 17 was reached. Then PSPP-CY scales began to plateau (see Figures 8 and 9).

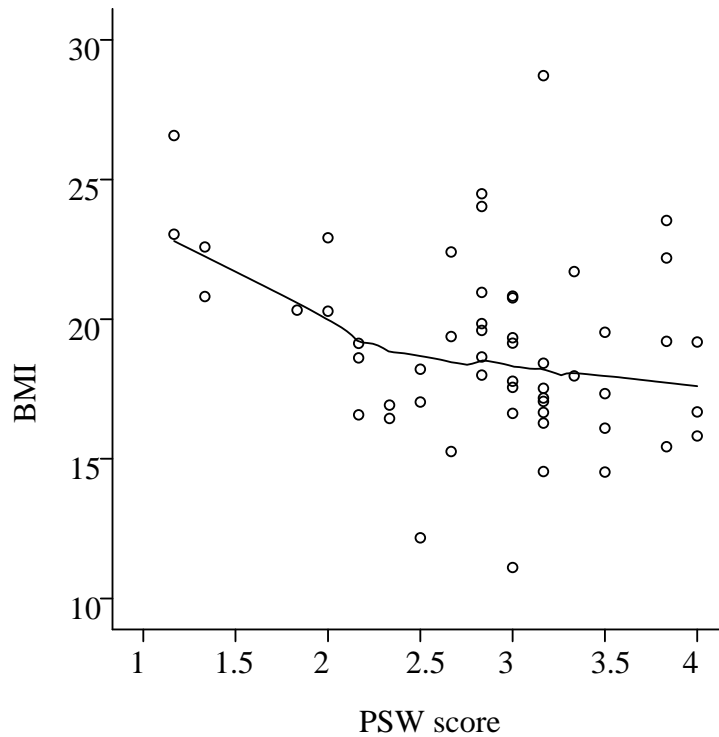


Figure 8. Scatter plot of BMI and physical self-worth scores for girls including Loess

Line of best fit (75% of points of fit).

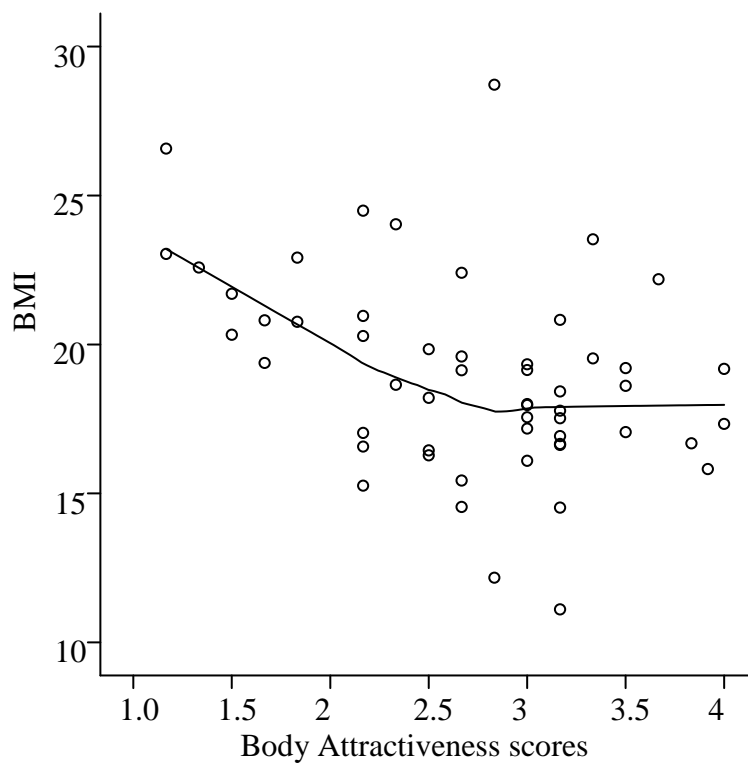


Figure 9. Scatter plot of BMI and body attractiveness scores for girls including Loess

Line of best fit (75% of points of fit).

Socio-cultural Attitudes to Appearance and BMI

Examination of the relationship between scores on the SATAQ and BMI were also considered important. It was not possible to examine differences in weight categorisations due to small sample sizes in some of the cells. Correlational analysis was employed to provide a picture of the relationship between BMI and the internalisation and awareness of socio-cultural attitudes to appearance as it pertains to muscularity for boys and thinness for girls.

For boys, BMI was found to be significantly positively associated with the internalisation scale of the SATAQ. Internalisation of socio-cultural attitudes to muscularity scores increased with increasing BMI. This relationship was weak, but significant ($r = -.298$, $n = 68$, $p = .013$). In regard to the girls, analysis did not reveal findings that reached significance.

Relationships Between Physical Self-Concept, Self-Objectification and Socio-Cultural Attitudes to Appearance

Correlation analysis (Pearson's r) was also calculated to examine the relationships between the various scales of the PSPP-CY, and the SATAQ and SOQ. However, much of this analysis was novel and some associations were anticipated based on similarities in theoretical underpinnings. Scatterplots, including Loess's line of fit, were produced in order to further examine the nature of these relationships.

Examination of the relationship between self-objectification (SOQ) and scales of the PSPP-CY was considered important. Although associations between domains hadn't been examined previously, such exploration expands understanding about the relationship between self-objectification and aspects of physical self-concept and

global self-esteem. This analysis was undertaken with the expectation that increasing self-objectification could be associated with decreasing physical self-concept, particularly decreasing body attractiveness and global self-esteem scores.

A significant negative relationship was found only between the self-objectification and global self-esteem ($r = -.193$, $N = 137$, $p = .023$). Although this relationship was very weak, it showed that as self-objectification increased, global self-esteem decreased as was predicted.

The relationship between young people's physical self-concept and scores reflecting socio-cultural attitudes to appearance were also examined using Pearson's (r) correlation. It was expected that increasing SATAQ scores, particularly on the internalisation scale, might be associated with decreasing scores on the global self-esteem, body attractiveness and physical self-worth scales.

The girls' data revealed a significant negative relationship between body attractiveness and internalisation scores on the SATAQ ($r = -.324$, $n = 65$, $p = .009$). Increasing internalisation scores were associated with decreasing body attractiveness scores for girls. The finding was a weak, but significant, relationship. Significant negative relationships were also found between global self-esteem and the internalisation and total scales of the SATAQ. The strength of these relationships was moderate and revealed that as these two SATAQ scores increased, global self-esteem scores decreased (internalisation $r = -.50$, $n = 65$, $p < .001$, total ($r = -.42$, $n = 65$, $p < .001$). A similar relationship was evident between physical self-worth and these same two SATAQ scales, although the relationship was slightly weaker ($r = -.497$, $n = 65$, $p < .001$; $r = -.422$, $n = 67$, $p < .001$ respectively). Analysis of the boys' data in regard to PSPP-CY scores and SATAQ scores did not reveal any relationships that reached significance.

Examination of the relationships between scores of self-objectification and socio-cultural attitudes to appearance for boys and girls were also considered important as these had not been previously examined. It was expected that increasing self-objectification would be associated with increasing internalisation and accordingly, total scores on the SATAQ.

For the boys, significant positive relationships were found between scores of self-objectification and all three scales of the SATAQ (internalisation – $r = -.377$, $n = 71$, $p = .001$; awareness – $r = -.381$, $n = 71$, $p = .001$; total – $r = -.409$, $n = 71$, $p < .001$). The correlations ranged from weak (for example, between SOQ scores and internalisation scores and SOQ scores and awareness scores) to moderate (for example, between SOQ and SATAQ total) which showed that as SOQ scores increased so too did scores on the SATAQ scales. The findings indicate that having an increased focus on the observable aspects of physical self-concept is associated with an increased internalisation and awareness of societal attitudes to muscularity for boys.

Scores on the SOQ were also found to be positively related to scores on the internalisation and total scales of the SATAQ for the girls. There was a moderate relationship in both cases ($r = .541$, $n = 66$, $p < .001$ and $r = .46$, $n = 68$, $p < .001$ respectively) with increasing scores on the SOQ associated with increasing scores on both of these scales. These scores indicate that having an increased focus on the observable aspects of physical self-concept is associated with increased internalisation of societal attitudes to thinness for girls.

Summary of Findings

In accordance with the hypothesis, the major findings can be summarised as follows:

1. Boys were found to be participating in adequate amounts of physical activity more than girls, on average, as hypothesised. This pattern was reflected in each of the different age groupings.
2. Boys were found to have significantly higher scores physical self-concept scores, on average, than were girls as hypothesised.
3. Contrary to the hypothesis, no significant differences were found between the different age groupings on measures of physical self-concept. However, examination of effect sizes indicated differences between age groups for girls but not for boys, with girls in younger groups scoring more highly (and positively) than girls in the oldest age group. Correlational findings also revealed weak negative relationships between age and sport competence, physical condition, physical strength, and physical self-worth for girls, thus providing only minimal support for the proposed hypothesis. No significant correlational findings and only small effect sizes were revealed in the boys' data which did not support the proposed hypothesis.
4. Overall, physically active participants scored, on average, more highly than inactive participations on the sport competence, physical condition, physical strength, body attractiveness, physical self-worth, and global self-esteem measures of physical self-concept as hypothesised.
5. On average, girls scored more highly on self-objectification than did boys as hypothesised. Age grouping differences were not revealed, contrary to the hypothesis.

6. Age group differences were revealed on socio-cultural attitudes to appearance regarding muscularity for boys, but only for the internalisation scale. While an age grouping difference was predicted, subsequent analysis revealed that the younger boys, on average, scored more highly than the older two age groups on the internalisation scale. Correlational analysis also found significant findings in the same direction. This was contrary to the hypothesis. Also contrary to the hypothesis, no significant age differences were revealed in the girls' data.
7. As hypothesised, positive correlational relationships were revealed between the subscales of the PSPP-CY both in the overall data and in the gender separated data. For both boys and girls, the strongest relationships were found between body attractiveness and physical self-worth.
8. No significant correlational relationships were identified between BMI and any subscale scores on the SATAQ for girls contrary to the hypothesis.
9. Increasing BMI was associated with increasing scores on the internalisation scale of the SATAQ for boys as had been hypothesised.
10. Increasing scores on self-objectification were found to be associated with increasing scores on the internalisation and total scales of the SATAQ providing support for the proposed hypothesis.
11. Significant negative correlational relationships were revealed between BMI and most subscales of the PSPP-CY providing support for the hypothesis when the overall data set was analysed. However, findings were not as clear when the data was analysed separately for boys and girls, providing only partial support for the hypothesis.

12. Increasing scores on self-objectification were found to be associated only with decreasing global self-esteem scores, not decreasing body attractiveness and physical self-concept scores, as had been anticipated.
13. Increasing scores on internalisation of socio-cultural attitudes to thinness were found to be associated with decreasing body attractiveness and global self-esteem scores for girls but not for boys, therefore providing only partial support for the proposed hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

Study 1

Overview

Study 1 used quantitative methods to explore gender and developmental differences in young people's perceptions of their bodies. Measures of physical self-concept, self-objectification and socio-cultural attitudes to appearance were explored. The results confirmed and extended much of the previous research. A number of relationships among variables, such as physical activity levels and BMI, were also considered. Many findings regarding physical activity levels, BMI, physical self-concept, self-objectification and socio-cultural attitudes to appearance were consistent with those of previous research when gender differences were examined. For example, on average more boys than girls were adequately physically active. In addition, boys, on average, scored more highly than girls on all measures of physical self-concept. In terms of self-objectification, the results were predominantly as hypothesised, with girls, on average, scoring higher than boys.

The findings in relation to age group differences in physical self-concept, self-objectification and socio-cultural attitudes to ideals of thinness and muscularity were more complex, and mostly contrary to hypothesised. For example, no significant age differences were found on the various measures of physical self-concept or the tendency to self-objectify in either girls or boys. In regards to socio-cultural attitudes to appearance, no age group differences were evident in the data for girls; however, the youngest boys, on average, were found to have higher levels of internalisation regarding socio-cultural ideals to muscularity than the older boys contrary to expected. These findings highlight the importance of the pre-adolescent period. The stability of measures such as self-objectification for girls and boys and physical self-

concept for boys, suggests that these constructs may be more robust and established early in life. The lack of age group differences in many of these scales reinforces the need to target interventions early in life. Developmental findings regarding the internalisation of socio-cultural attitudes to muscularity for boys may highlight the need for protective strategies to assist young males who may be particularly vulnerable to unrealistic societal ideals learned early in life.

Existing literature indicates that the failure to reveal developmental differences in some of the data, such as in the physical self-concept data of boys, is likely to reflect several factors. These include the different impacts that physical maturation has on girls and boys and whether maturation contributes positively or negatively to societal ideals of appearance. For example, for boys puberty is accompanied by physical developments such as increases in height, weight and often muscularity. These are physical attributes often positively associated with masculinity and thus may contribute to a more favourable self-concept for boys. In contrast, the increases in weight and body fat that accompany puberty for girls may take them further from societal ideals of femininity, thus contributing to a less favourable impact on self-concept. However, the current study did not find the decrease in physical self-concept expected from girls, which appears to be contrary to this line of reasoning. Additional factors include changing cognitive abilities and other gender influenced socio-cultural expectations and experiences of participants (e.g., Hagger et al., 2005; Offer et al., 1996; Wilgenbusch & Merrell, 1999; Whitehead & Corbin, 1997). The strong association between body attractiveness and participants' overall physical self-worth was also highlighted by the findings of this study.

Finally, the data revealed a negative association between self-objectification and global self-esteem in girls, but not between self-objectification and other body related self-concept domains such as physical self-worth or body attractiveness. This finding was contrary to the relationship found between internalization of societal beliefs about thinness which was associated with decreases in self-esteem, body attractiveness and physical self-worth. This suggests that thinness remains one of the most powerful ideals impacting on women's feeling about themselves and their bodies. The contribution of this ideal will be expanded on further in this section and later in the thesis.

Longitudinal, developmental research (versus cross-sectional research) with larger samples and with the addition of qualitative designs would assist in further exploring the findings of study 1. The use of correlational research designs in the current study was useful in identifying important relationships between variables, but prohibits discussions about causality which are also needed to better understand young peoples' physical self-concept and socio-cultural attitudes to appearance.

Physical activity

In line with earlier studies, the current study showed that boys, on average, were more likely to be adequately physically active than girls (e.g., Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003a, 2003b; Hickman et al., 2000; Riddoch et al., 2004; Roberts et al., 2004). Expected age differences were also found in the data. On average, greater numbers of the youngest participants were more physically active than were the older participants (e.g., Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008; Corbin et al., 2004; Roberts et al., 2004).

Physical Self-Concept

Gender differences in all aspects of physical self-concept were evident in the current study. Consistent with earlier studies examining gender differences, in this study boys scored more highly than girls on all domains of physical self-concept - physical self-worth, sport competence, global self-esteem, strength, and body condition. Their higher scores on the body attractiveness domain, indicates a relatively more positive physical self-concept for boys than girls (e.g., Crocker et al., 2000; Hagger et al., 2005; Klomsten, Skaalvick & Espnes, 2004; Welk & Eklund, 2005).

Gender differences in physical self-concept favouring boys over girls may be related to the boys' higher levels of participation in physical activity. This would lead them to acquire higher levels of skills, competence and improved physical condition, which specifically relate to physical self-concept. The physical self-concept constructs measured by the PSPP-CY were also more strongly associated with masculinity than femininity due to the constructs clear links with sports and games (i.e., sporting competence, physical strength etc.). Although this study did not measure masculinity or femininity per se, it is possible that these constructs may be more desirable to boys in the construction of masculinity, potentially elevating their physical self-concept scores above the scores of girls and increasing boys' participation in physical activity in order to achieve success in these domains. A strong interrelationship is implied. Lower scores in the various aspects of physical self-concept for girls compared to boys may reflect girls' experiences of increased social pressure to conform to appearance ideals associated with femininity as opposed to the more functional aspects of physical self-concept assessed by this particular self-concept tool (e.g., Hagger et al., 2005; Marsh, 1987; Wilgenbusch & Merrell, 1999; Whitehead & Corbin, 1997). For example, many girls may have less interest or investment than boys in the

development of the physical self competence domains of strength and sports competence. Furthermore, achievement of physical appearance ideals is more subjective and success is more difficult to obtain and measure. The concept and influence of masculinity and femininity, will be considered more strongly in study 2 of this thesis. It is likely that these constructs have an important role in physical self-concept that goes beyond discussion of simple gender differences in scores.

This study used broader age windows than earlier studies in order to better examine age group differences in physical self-concept. This contrasts with previous studies which have typically used narrower age ranges (e.g., 8 to 18 years in the current study versus 11 to 14 years used by Hagger et al., 2005). In the data reported here, despite the increased age spans utilised, no significant age group differences were found in the physical self-concept data. However, examination of effect sizes revealed large and medium effect sizes between the scores of girls in the youngest age group and girls in the oldest age group on all subscales of the PSPP-CY, with scores favouring the youngest girls. Correlational analysis also revealed weak negative relationships between several of the PSPP-CY subscales and age for girls. These findings suggest the need for further research regarding developmental differences in physical self-concept, particularly for girls.

However overall, the findings of this study are consistent with Hagger et al's., (2005) assertion that developmental differences are not as robust as gender differences. The failure to reveal significant developmental differences may provide some further support for the idea that physical self-concept is a relatively robust construct across late childhood to late adolescence.

A possible explanation for the overall stability in various physical self-concept scores across pre-adolescence and adolescence may stem from the complex developmental tasks and social challenges facing young people in these age groups (Hargreaves, 1994; Offer et al., 1996; Radzik et al., 2002). For example, boys' sport competence and global self-esteem scores may benefit from increased experience and skill development through ongoing participation in physical activity. Their body attractiveness, strength, physical condition and overall physical self-concept scores may increase with physical maturation by pulling boys closer to physical ideals through increased body size, musculature and strength. All this may be counterbalanced by other equally important developmental issues. The increased focus on other identities (including romantic relationships and vocational goals), the increased ability to accurately judge ability and the tendency to self-scrutinize that comes with increasing age may all act to counteract the other more positive perceptions (Radzik et al., 2002).

For girls, stability in physical self-concept may reflect the 'normative discontent' experienced by women of all ages in body related concepts (Rodin, Silberstein, Striegel-Moore, 1985). Tiggemann and Lynch (2001) for example, found similar rates of body dissatisfaction in their study of women, from young adults to 80 year olds. Previous studies of body satisfaction, awareness of dieting etc., have shown pre-adolescent girls to have similar concerns and awareness of body related issues as older girls (e.g., Grogan & Wainwright, 1996; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Schur et al., 2000; Thelen & Cormier, 1995; Wood, Becker, & Thompson, 1996 cited in Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003). The current study also found a lack of differences in the younger

girls' awareness and adoption of societal ideals related to thinness compared to the older girls'. It is not surprising that scores in these theoretically related areas are similar.

Future studies could further explore gender related issues in physical self-concept domains over time through the use of longitudinal research designs as opposed to cross-sectional studies and using larger subject numbers than was possible in this study. Longitudinal investigations would allow for an additional examination physical self-concept, across pre-adolescence and adolescence in the same groups of individuals. Downward examination of physical self-concept would also appear to be important in order to better understand how or if this concept manifests at earlier ages.

Qualitative studies would also allow more in-depth examination of girls and boys experiences across this time frame including those experiences that are contradictory and complex. Qualitative studies may allow the examination of the complex interplay between physical self-concept domains and the various aspects of physical maturation as well as other possible influencing factors impacting at the level of the individual such as identity formation, ethnicity and religiosity.

As anticipated, and in accordance with previous studies, a significant positive relationship was found between those males and females who participated in sufficient amounts of physical activity and scores on the various domains of physical self-concept in the current study (e.g., Crocker et al., 2000; Hagger et al., 1998; Welk & Eklund, 2005). In this study, the males and females who participated in sufficient physical activity scored more highly on all domains of the PSPP-CY. These relationship were demonstrated even when participants as young as eight years of age were included in the sample, representing an expected, but unique, developmental

finding. Although causality cannot be implied, this result suggests that those who participate in sufficient amounts of physical activity have more positive physical self-concepts, regardless of gender.

Several other important findings were revealed in the present study regarding the different aspects of the participants' physical self-concept. Earlier studies have found that perceptions of body attractiveness are perhaps the most powerful contributor to overall feelings of self-worth (e.g., Burnett, 1994; Boiven et al., 1992; Fox, 1997; Raustorp et al., 2005). This assertion was supported by the current study which found that the positive association between participants' scores on physical self-worth and body attractiveness was stronger than any other relationships in the area of physical self-concept. While this finding was expected for girls, examination of gender separated data revealed that this was also true for boys. The finding supports suggestions that men and boys are increasingly being exposed to, and are ascribing to, similar pressures to girls in terms of conforming to societal ideals of physical appearance (e.g., Cohane & Pope, 2001; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Pope et al., 2000a; Rohlinger, 2002; Silberstein et al., 1988).

Consistent with earlier studies (e.g., Raustorp et al (2005), this study found participants' BMI to be associated with various aspects of physical self-concept. Increasing BMI was associated with decreasing scores on all scales of the PSPP-CY in the data set pooled for gender and age, with two exceptions. A weak positive relationship was found of with physical strength and a significant relationship was not found at all for sport competence. Gender differences in the correlational data revealed significant relationships for boys between BMI and physical condition and physical strength, but not for the other domains of physical self-concept. For girls, increasing BMI was significantly associated with decreasing scores on body attractiveness and

physical self-worth. These findings may represent key differences in views held about the physical body by boys and girls. For example, it may be that boys do not view increased body mass as negatively in relation to body attractiveness as girls because increased weight may be associated with 'looking stronger', thus more muscular, a valued attribute (e.g., Cohane & Pope, 2001; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Pope et al., 2000a; Smolak, Levine & Thompson, 2001).

For the boys in this study, increasing BMI was significantly associated with decreasing scores on questionnaire items related to fitness and energy levels. This indicates that increasing body mass may be recognised as impeding performance in physical activity. The existence of a relationship between increasing BMI and increased scores on the strength Scale of the PSPP-CY would also seem to reflect the importance of muscularity to the overall physical self-concept of boys and men (Levinson et al., 1986; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Page & Allen, 1995). This finding raises an important point in the work regarding boys and men that requires further examination. While boys have often reported a desire for increased weight and musculature, it is unclear if the desire is linked to increased functionality or appearance or a combination of the two. The findings of the current study might suggest that it is more intimately linked with functionality, as physical self-concept items in this questionnaire tapped strength as the functionality of muscles. However, this claim is far from conclusive and is explored in greater detail in study 2.

The relationship between increasing BMI, decreasing physical condition and increasing strength scores may, therefore, reflect boys' tendency, in general, to focus on non-observable function-related aspects of their bodies, relative to observable appearance-related aspects. This assertion is supported by much of the literature

(Connell, 1983, 1987, 1995; Franzoi, 1995; Grogan & Richards, 2002) and, by the current study's finding that, on average, boys tend to self-objectify significantly less than do girls.

The results for girls indicate that increasing BMI is associated with decreased physical self-concept, particularly as it pertains to their perceived body attractiveness and overall physical self-worth. This finding is not unexpected and is consistent with earlier studies that have shown that women tend to self-objectify more than men, and increased body dissatisfaction is associated with increasing BMI (Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001; Stice, 1998 etc.). This result is also unsurprising given the dissatisfaction many girls feel with their bodies, even when they are not overweight (e.g., Blowers et al., 2003; Kelly et al., 1999; Rolland et al., 1997; Sabbah, Vereecken, Abdeen, Coats & Maes, 2008).

Self-Objectification

The nature of self-objectification scores must be considered before interpreting the results. In the current study, self-objectification was measured by rating the importance of non-observable or function related items, such as fitness, health and strength to physical self-concept. This was compared to the importance of observable or appearance based items such as attractiveness or being sexy, to physical self-concept. Rating each of these items culminated in a score ranging between -25 and +25 with higher scores associated with higher endorsement of observable appearance-based items, thereby reflecting higher rates of self-objectification. Higher levels of self-objectification has been associated with increased incidence of eating disorders, depression and lower self-esteem (e.g., Calogero et al., 2005; Moradi et al., 2005; Strelan et al., 2003; Tylka & Hill, 2004). However, the exact level/s at which self-objectification becomes problematic and begins to significantly impact on other areas

is unknown and warrants further investigation. In the current study, average scores for both boys and girls of all ages were in the negative range, indicating that although some level of self-objectification existed, it was relatively low. This must be taken into consideration in the interpretation of results.

The average self-objectification scores for girls in the current study were lower than those reported in previous studies with similar age groups. This indicates that the girls in this sample rated observable appearance-based items as relatively less important to their physical self-concept than did girls in the other studies (e.g., Fredrickson and Harrison, 2005; Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Slater & Tiggemann, 2002).

Differences between self-objectification scores in the current study and previous studies may be attributed to the particular samples used. The current study used participants from three independent, religious affiliated schools, two Anglican and one Christian. The schools were selected as they were independent and could provide participants from a variety of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. The religious background of the school was not a consideration at the time of selection; however, it might have inadvertently impacted on the results. Recent studies have shown that various religious beliefs, religious activities such as praying, and even exposure to religious affirmations about the body, are associated with more positive body image and body esteem in terms of weight and appearance (Boyatziz & McConnell, 2002; Boyatzis, Kline & Backof, 2007; Boyatziz & Walsh, 2006; Mahoney et al., 2005). Each of the schools included in this study incorporate active religious teachings in the school program and, thus, may have positively impacted on the physical self-concept scores relative to other young people not exposed to such teachings. It is also possible that adoption of particular religious beliefs may have resulted in these students being

shielded by their parents and/or school from media of a highly sexualised or objectified nature, thus impacting on their levels of self-objectification. The varied impact of religiousness and/or spirituality has not been considered by the previous studies on self-objectification or physical self-concept.

Previous studies by Fredrickson and Harrison (2005) and Slater and Tiggemann (2002) also provided only mean self-objectification scores for all participants in their studies, not for the smaller age divisions as provided in this study. This also makes it difficult to directly compare of average scores.

Previous studies have consistently reported relatively higher scores of self-objectification for adult women than for adult men. Similar comparisons have not been made in the past for adolescent and preadolescent girls and boys (Fredrickson et al., 1998; Hebl et al., 2004; Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004 etc.). The current study found that, overall, girls aged eight to 18 years reported higher scores of self-objectification than boys of the same ages. This finding demonstrates that, on average the pre-adolescent and adolescent girls in the study were more likely than the boys to rate the importance of observable appearance items on their physical self-concept more highly than non-observable function-related items. Given the pervasive and well documented media objectification of women of all ages in society (e.g., APA, 2007) this finding is not unexpected.

Harrison and Fredrickson (2003) examined relative levels of self-objectification in adolescent girls and found that, on average, older girls (12 to 19 years) experienced higher levels of self-objectification than younger girls (10 to 11 years). The current study did not find statistically significant differences between the age groups under examination, indicating that the self-objectification scores of the eight to 10 year olds did not differ significantly from either of the older age groups. The inclusion of a male

sample also failed to reveal significant age group differences in self-objectification, indicating that the tendency to rate the relative importance of observable appearance and non-observable function-based items on physical self-concept does not shift significantly with increasing age, for either boys or girls.

The failure to find age group differences in self-objectification in conjunction with the lack of developmental differences in physical self-concept as measured by the PSPP-CY in this study supports Haggars et al., (2005) assertions about the robustness of physical self-concept and its establishment at a relatively young age. The pervasive nature of objectifying images and portraying of women of all ages may again help explain the lack of age group differences in self-objectification for girls. The lack of an age group finding for males is also consistent with the suggestion that males are being increasingly objectified from a young age (Pope et al., 2000a; Rohlinger, 2002; Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004).

Many of the prior studies on self-objectification have used a variety of samples with the aim of examining the concept in groups of individuals with differing demographic characteristics. For example, they have examined differences in self-objectification in participants of different ethnicities or participants engaged in different types of physical activity in order to identify factors associated with differing levels of self-objectification (e.g., Harrison & Fredrickson, 2003; Hebl, King & Lin, 2004; Prichard & Tiggemann, 2005).

These studies highlight two issues pertinent to the current study. Firstly, it is difficult to find a direct comparison group for this study as samples of participants have varied considerably in ethnicity, age, and physical activity levels etc. Secondly, some of these unaccounted for variables may have a significant impact on levels of self-objectification. For example, research by Prichard and Tiggemann (2005) and

Strelan et al., (2003) indicated that individuals who were participating in physical activity for appearance based reasons scored more highly on self-objectification than those participating for other reasons such as improved fitness. This factor was not accounted for in the current study nor in many previous studies, although it may well have a significant impact on experiences of self-objectification. Further research on self-objectification is needed to gain a fuller understanding of the relative influence of characteristics/factors such as reasons for exercise, religiousness and ethnicity in the Australian context.

Attitudes to Appearance Regarding Thinness and Muscularity

Women and girls are extensively exposed to sexualised and objectified images of women in the media (APA, 2007). Boys are also increasingly being exposed to similar images of men (e.g., Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Pope et al., 2001; Pope et al., 2000a; Rohlinger, 2002). In the current Westernised social climate, idealised images of women are thin or underweight while the ideal male is excessively muscular (Pope et al., 2001; Pope et al., 2000a). The studies looking at age differences in girls' and boy's awareness of and internalisation of these ideals have reported mixed results. Using narrower age ranges than used in the current study, Sands and Wardle (2003) and Murnen et al., (2003) found no evidence that adoption of dominant body ideals changes with increasing age for boys or girls. Increases in awareness of socio-cultural ideals related to thinness were found with increasing age in just one study of girls and were explained by older girls' increased exposure to idealised representations (Sands & Wardle, 2003). The use of a wider developmental window in this study than in previous ones was expected to detect any significant age related differences that might be present in participants' awareness and/or adoption of dominant societal beliefs about thinness and muscularity.

The current study did not reveal any significant age group differences in either awareness or internalisation of socio-cultural attitudes to thinness as an appearance ideal for girls. The youngest age group of girls in this study (aged eight to 10 years) were just as likely to endorse and be aware of beliefs about thinness as were participants in the two older age groups, including participants up to the age of 18 years.

These results probably reflect the pervasive exposure of girls to objectifying and sexualising influences from a very young age and the fact that even very young girls demonstrate an awareness of and desire for the ideal/thin body (e.g., Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Schur et al., 2000; Tiggemann & Pennington, 1990; Tiggemann & Wilson-Barrett, 1998). The findings are also consistent with the results of the current study which failed to find any significant age group differences on measures of physical self-concept and self-objectification. The findings regarding these important body related concepts suggest that many beliefs and attitudes towards the physical body are already established by eight years of age and do not shift significantly over the next decade, despite ongoing physical and cognitive maturation.

Age group differences in boys' internalisation of socio-cultural attitudes toward appearance related to muscularity were revealed in the data. Such a result has not been found in previous studies. The results showed that the youngest boys had the highest scores for internalisation of muscularity ideals which significantly decreased in the 10 to 14 year age group, and then remained constant until 18 years. This pattern of results occurred despite the youngest boys having an awareness of socio-cultural ideals related to muscularity similar to that of the older boys.

One explanation for this finding is that as boys mature, while they remain aware of the muscular ideals for men, they may become more conscious that these ideals are unrealistic and unobtainable, thus increasing their resistance and internalisation of these images and beliefs. Accordingly, girls also might be expected to become increasingly aware of the unrealistic nature of thinness ideals with age. The current results, however, indicate that their internalization of such beliefs does not decrease with age. Decreased scores in internalization of cultural ideals of muscularity for boys, therefore, may better reflect the fact that with increasing age many boys reach physical maturation which pulls them closer to the physical ideals of muscularity that they desire (Hargreaves, 1994; Offer et al., 1996). The inclusion of a broader developmental window (up to 18 years) than previously used may have enabled these differences to be revealed here and not in earlier studies.

The inclusion of this wider developmental window may also provide an important site for future research as it could enable the examination of a possible site of resistance for boys which coincides with the beginnings of physical maturation and increased cognitive abilities. The ability to overcome previously held problematic internalised beliefs is particularly helpful and further examination of how this is achieved would be important. The inclusion of longitudinal studies versus cross-sectional research as well as qualitative research would also be helpful in enabling a more detailed examination of internalized beliefs about muscularity and how these develop within groups of individuals over time.

Unexpectedly, few significant relationships were found between participants' BMI and their socio-cultural attitudes to thinness or muscularity. In this study, increasing BMI was found to be associated with increasing internalisation of societal beliefs about muscularity, but only for boys. Based on the previous literature which

suggests that those with increasing BMIs' experience poorer body and self-esteem and body satisfaction than those with lower BMI's (e.g., Blowers et al., 2003, Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001; Sands & Wardle, 2003; Raustorp et al., 2005), it was expected that girls, particularly those with increasing BMI scores would experience greater internalisation of societal beliefs about thinness as a result of not meeting these ideals.

This result was not found, but these results may have been unduly influenced by the nature of the sample, particularly the small numbers of overweight and at risk of overweight young people actually participating in the current study. Approximately 13% of boys and 15% of girls fell into these categories, whereas in the general population up to 25% of young people have been identified as falling into these categories (Booth, Okely, Denney-Wilson, Hardy, Yang & Dobbins, 2006). Thus, increasing scores in BMI in the current study may represent relative increases in individuals who predominantly fall within the normal weight range. The findings, therefore, may not fully reflect the relationships that might be present in samples where greater numbers of at risk of overweight and overweight young people are represented.

Physical Self-Concept, Self-Objectification and Internalisation of Socio-Cultural Ideals of Thinness and Muscularity and their Relationship to Each Other

An individual's tendency to internalise dominant ideals of appearance related to thinness, something almost impossible to achieve in reality, was expected to be associated with lower scores on various aspects of physical self-concept, particularly body attractiveness.

Given the strength of the relationship found between scores on body attractiveness and physical self-worth, and body attractiveness and global self-esteem in the current study and previous research, a significant relationship was also

anticipated with between internalisation of thinness ideals and these two other domains (PSW and GSE). Although causality cannot be determined in correlational data, the results of this study do support the idea that the adoption of dominant beliefs about thinness is associated with poorer physical self-concept, particularly those aspects associated with physical attractiveness.

Similarly, higher rates of self-objectification have also been associated with poorer body satisfaction, body esteem, and self-esteem (Strelan et al., 2003; Miner-Rubino et al., 2002). Therefore, increased self-objectification was expected to be significantly associated with decreases in various aspects of physical self-concept, including global self-esteem, physical self-worth and body attractiveness in this study, although these relationships had not been previously examined using the SOQ. In the current study, however, only the relationship between self-objectification and global self-esteem was found to be significant. The relationship was negative, indicating that as self objectification scores increased, global self-esteem scores decreased.

It is unclear why the increased tendency to view physical self-concept based on observable appearance-based factors is not negatively related to feelings of physical self-worth and attractiveness when it does appear to impact negatively on global self-esteem. This finding is puzzling, as increased self-objectification has been associated with decreases in other similar concepts such as body satisfaction and body esteem (Strelan et al., 2003; Miner-Rubino et al., 2002).

The findings of this study regarding the associations between internalisation of thinness ideals, the tendency to self-objectify and physical self-concept may assist in identifying differences between the two concepts. The results would suggest that decreases in global self-esteem, body attractiveness and physical self-worth are specifically associated with the adoption of thinness ideals. Self objectification

includes the broader tendency to view oneself based on observable appearance-based criterion which includes, but is not exclusively related to, thinness. This differentiation supports the idea that thinness, in particular, is one of the most powerful appearance ideals internalised by girls.

Significant relationships were not found between the various aspects of physical self-concept and the internalisation of the muscular ideal or self-objectification for boys, except for global self-esteem. The lack of significant relationships between these concepts within the boys' data may reflect the different impacts of physical maturation and societal influences on young people of different genders. Increased internalisation and adoption of ideals about muscularity may not be associated with decreases in body attractiveness and physical self-concept as physical maturation often pulls boys closer to this desired ideal (Hargreaves, 1994; Offer et al., 1996). As boys endeavour to increase their muscularity through physical activity, they may also positively influence feelings associated with physical strength, coordination and body conditioning, thus elevating overall physical self-concept scores. In girls, striving for thinness often includes strategies such as dietary restriction and/or purging, in addition to physical activity, which may make little positive contribution to the various domains of physical self-concept.

Through this study it was also possible to examine the relationship between the internalisation of thinness and muscular ideals and self-objectification in both boys and girls, separately. For girls, dissatisfaction with weight and the desire for thinness are well established (e.g., Blowers et al., 2003; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2002). Self objectification also involves the internalisation of societal values related to bodies. It is the tendency of individuals to view themselves from an outsider's viewpoint, to view their physical self-concept as being more strongly related

to observable appearance-based qualities including weight, rather than basing it on non-observable functional qualities such as being fit, energetic and healthy. A strong relationship was, therefore, expected between participants' tendency to self-objectify as measured by the SOQ and the adoption and internalisation of dominant societal ideals about thinness for girls as measured by the SATAQ. The results of study 1 proved this prediction correct, finding that increased self-objectification scores were significantly associated with increased scores on the internalisation subscale of the SATAQ, reflecting girls' increasing internalisation of the thinness ideal.

Fredrickson et al (1998) argued that the focus on external appearances is enough to result in the negative consequences of self-objectification regardless of whether or not an individual experiences body dissatisfaction. Later research supported this claim by showing that mere exposure to an objectifying image, text or situation resulted in significant increases in self-objectification and its consequences in both men and women (Fredrickson et al., 1998; Hebl et al., 2004; Kittler, 2003; Roberts & Gettman, 2004). For example, Hebl et al., (2004) found that men and women from varied ethnic backgrounds all experienced increased self-objectification scores and subsequently performed poorer on maths tasks, when asked to perform the mathematical questions in conditions that either induced increased self-objectification or did not. Self-objectification was induced as asking participants to complete the maths task whilst wearing a one piece swimsuit or a jumper. Examination of the relationships between self-objectification and socio-cultural ideals of appearance in the current study revealed a significant positive relationship between awareness of muscular ideals and self-objectification for boys, a relationship not found between awareness of thinness

ideals and self-objectification for girls. This finding may reflect a different relationship for boys and girls between their awareness of such ideals in society and the view they then take of their own physical bodies.

The targeting of boys and men in a highly sexualized and objectified manner, for example, in advertising, is only a relatively recent phenomenon, compared to the sexualisation and objectification of women. The lack of a significant association for girls between awareness of the thinness ideal and self-objectification may reflect the fact that girls and women have become more educated about the inability to achieve thinness ideals in ways that men and boys have yet to do regarding muscularity. For example, women's magazines now include frequent articles about the dangers of eating disorders and about body and self-esteem, alongside advertising promoting diets and other body-changing strategies. The inclusion of such articles and education programs within some schools may have had the desired effect, providing girls and women with improved information about and awareness of these body related issues (while not necessarily shifting their attitudes and behaviours towards the underlying ideals). The inclusion of similar articles in men's magazines would appear to be rarer so boys and men may be more vulnerable currently than young women to media campaigns targeting them, although more research is needed on this topic.

BMI and Missing Data

In this study, guardians were asked to complete demographic information in conjunction with their children in order to facilitate information that was both complete and accurate. Despite this procedure, significantly more girls than boys completed questionnaires that failed to include information essential to the calculation of a BMI (i.e., information about their weight and/or height).

Tiggemann (2006) noted the importance of missing BMI data, particularly weight data, in other studies and proposed that it was the result of motivated non-reporting, especially for older girls. She suggested that missing data reflected “girls most worried about their bodies and weight” presumably by having a BMI higher than they wished to have (Tiggemann, 2006: p349). In the current study, some support for this claim is found in the fact that only approximately 15% of the girls in this sample were identified as being ‘at risk of’ or ‘overweight’. This figure is eight percent less than NSW averages of up to 23% of girls who are either overweight or obese (Booth et al., 2006). Under-reporting of BMI data is also consistent with the current cultural preoccupation of girls with ideals of thinness and the dissatisfaction experienced by females who do not meet thinness ideals and even those who do. These gendered findings therefore are consistent with social constructivist and feminist theorists (e.g., Bordo, 1993; Connell, 2000) who would argue that the experiences of women (and men) are ever changing and reflect the social, political and other contexts in which they exist.

It might be argued that missing weight and/or height data, in this study where parents were also invited to contribute, indicates that beliefs about the importance of thinness may be held, not just by the individual girls, but by their carers as well, or that the girls’ carers were sympathetic to their charges’ desires not to include such information. An alternative explanation could be that these girls and their families have adopted a more healthy approach to young women’s’ body image concerns and do not record or choose not to obtain this information, for example, by not keeping scales in their houses. Alternatively, it may have been that the rates of young people in the healthy and unhealthy weight ranges may have varied as a result of the

independent, religious affiliated schooling they received. It is not possible to speculate further about the reasons behind this missing data without further specific research exploring the possible factors contributing to this finding.

Methodological Considerations

Low return rates were experienced for the targeted population in all of the participating schools. In all cases, information forms were sent out in existing mail-outs accompanying other important school materials such as fee statements and school newsletters. It is possible that study participation was not highlighted nor prioritized in this process, resulting in low return rates. Furthermore, all schools reported that they were in heavy demand for study projects and expressed concern that parents were becoming overloaded with such requests. As a result, findings should be interpreted with some caution given the small sample size.

There were also some challenges with questionnaires utilised in the current study. The challenges mostly reflected the limited research that has been conducted in this area using pre-adolescent samples, a strength of the current study. For example, the SOQ has not previously been used on participants under the age of 10 years. As a result, several linguistic and administrative alterations were made to the questionnaire to make it more age appropriate. Similarly, minor linguistic changes were made to the SATAQ in line with those made by Sands and Wardle (2003) and Blowers et al (2004), to promote understanding by the youngest age groups. Other researchers have successfully modified similar questionnaires for use with younger children without significantly affecting their overall validity or reliability (e.g., Murnen, et al., 2003; Sands & Wardle, 2003; Smolak et al., 2001; van den Bergh & de Rycke, 2003). The current study found sufficient levels of internal consistency for the SATAQ and PSPP-CY.

To ensure that any changes made did not alter the meaning of the questionnaires, the original and modified questionnaires were reviewed by the author and two other academics experienced in psychometric testing. Any areas of contention were re-examined until consensus was reached. The questionnaires were also trialled on a small number of eight to 11 year olds to assess suitability.

The current study also utilized two different physical activity questionnaires. While this was not ideal, a decision was made to change from the APARQ to the WHO physical activity questions primarily because of concerns that the lengthy nature of the APARQ may have been negatively affecting return rates. It was ultimately determined that the WHO questionnaires would collect adequate information for the current study's aims with a much reduced time demand. This decision is in keeping with the recommendations of Welk and Corbin, (2004:p.64) who highlight the need to ensure that the measure/s selected meets the needs of the particular research.

The current study also employed proxy versions of the APARQ and WHO physical activity questionnaire for completion by parents in conjunction with their children. These replaced investigator administered questionnaires to accommodate time constraints and the young age of some participants. A similar adaptation of the APARQ was recently used by O'Conner et al (2003). While proxy measures have limitations, they are also recognised as having important benefits including the ability to collect data from young children who lack the cognitive abilities to complete accurate self report questionnaires while having minimal effect on the behaviours under examination (Welk & Corbin, 2000; Sallis & Saelens, 2000).

Despite the use of two different physical activity questionnaires, findings were consistent with earlier studies both numerically (for example, with Booth et al., 1997) and in the pattern of findings they presented (for example, Roberts et al., 2004). Consistency of measurements and definitions in the area of physical activity is a challenge not only for the current study, but also for future studies in this important area (O'Connor et al., 2003).

Another significant area of consideration in the current study stems from the fact that many of the findings result from correlational data analysis. As such, they do not reveal causality, but rather demonstrate a relationship between two factors. For example, although the study found a negative relationship between BMI and physical self-concept and its various domains, these findings may demonstrate that as BMI increases, physical self-concept scores decrease or, conversely, that poorer physical self-concept may result in less engagement in physical activity and subsequently higher BMI scores. Caution, therefore, must be taken interpreting correlational findings.

Consideration must also be given to the fact that the participants for this study all came from religion-based, fee-paying, independent schools. It is possible, therefore, that the demographics and characteristics of the sample may differ from those of the broader population both in socioeconomic factors and also in terms of their beliefs and values about their bodies. Certain aspects of religiosity have been associated with improved body image scores (Boyatziz & McConnell, 2002; Boyatzis et al., 2007; Boyatziz & Walsh, 2006; Mahoney et al., 2005). The current study also indicated little ethnic diversity with approximately 92% of participants indicating Australia as their country of birth, whereas other studies have reported much greater ethnic diversity, a factor that may impact on issues such as self-objectification (e.g.,

Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005; Hebl et al., 2004. Therefore, it is possible that there are unexplored characteristics of individuals and/or sub-groups that may influence scores on these scales.

Strengths

The current study had a large number of strengths. For example, despite difficulties in obtaining a suitable physical activity assessment, the questions used measured physical activity in a brief but meaningful way for young participants. Both measures were able to reflect children's everyday and incidental physical activity habits such as playing games. They were not limited to participation in organised sports and activities.

One of the major strengths of the current study is that it placed under close examination the experiences of pre-adolescent children. As the pre-cursor to adolescence, this developmental phase is essential to understanding the development and formation of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours about bodies and physical activity in young people. In particular, this study extended the use of the self-objectification to preadolescent children, something that has not previously been done.

A further strength of the current study was the inclusion of young males in the sample. Boys and men are often relatively neglected in research around body image issues despite being increasingly sexualized and targeted in the media (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Pope et al., 2001; Pope et al., 2000a; Rohlinger, 2002). The inclusion of boys in the current study allowed for meaningful gender comparisons as well as the examination of developmental issues.

This study was also important in that it confirmed the findings of earlier studies, while also providing significant extensions to previous works. For example, confirmatory evidence of a relationship between physical self-concept and participation in physical activity was found. However, the current study also extended this to include a younger sample.

Other new findings were also present in the current study. For example, increasing self-objectification was found to be associated with decreasing global self-esteem. Further, increasing internalization of thinness ideals by girls was associated with decreasing physical self-concept in the areas of global self-esteem, physical self-worth and body attractiveness. The findings regarding relationships between increased self-objectification and increasing awareness of socio cultural attitudes to muscularity for boys, also implicates potential areas of gender difference borne out by different societal experiences. Failure to reveal age group differences in self-objectification for the boys and girls is important to investigate further as it indicates little shift in levels of self-objectification between pre-adolescence and later adolescence.

These findings challenge assumptions about young children's' beliefs about their physical selves. The data suggests underlying gender differences which have important implications for planning interventions to target problematic beliefs in young people.

CHAPTER 4: STUDY 2

Literature Review and Introduction

Overview

Study 1 provided a snapshot of young peoples' perceptions and experiences of their bodies as they relate to various aspects of physical self-concept. As a quantitative study the data provided only one form of understanding of how theoretical constructs such as self-objectification and physical self-concept were experienced by young people of both genders. While providing valuable information, the quantitative data was unable to explore in depth young peoples' lived experiences. Nor was it able to account for how young peoples' physical self perceptions differ with context and how experiences of contradiction, resistance and compliance are negotiated with the complex contexts of young peoples' lives. Therefore, study 2 moves from a quantitative psychological understanding of young peoples' perceptions and experiences of their bodies to a more dynamic social constructive understanding of these complex experiences.

For example, the questionnaires used in study 1, while providing useful information about self-objectification, internalisation and awareness of socio-cultural attitudes to appearance and physical self-concept, did so by measuring an essentially static or "trait" form of these concepts. They tapped into individuals' general or most common feelings, beliefs and attitudes about these aspects of physical experience. However, research suggests that for many of these constructs a "state" form also exists, that may or may not differ from the trait form.

Quantitative research has demonstrated that a "state" form of self-objectification can be induced in both men and women (Hebl et al., 2004). Researchers induced self-objectification in adult men and women by asking

participants to perform a maths task while wearing swimming togs or a jumper. Wearing togs resulted in increased self-objectification and poorer maths performances by both male and female participants of varying ethnicities, compared to those wearing a jumper. Another study found that self-objectification and its negative effects could be 'induced' simply by reading text that included objectifying concepts (Roberts & Gettman, 2004).

A small number of qualitative studies that have examined individuals' lived experiences and feelings about their bodies have also found that experiences are not static but rather change in different contexts (e.g., Embrey & Drummond, 1997; George, 2005; Greenleaf, 2002; Krane et al., 2004; Russell, 2002). For example, athletic women who report feeling happy and proud of their strong, skilled, muscular bodies in the context of elite level sports are often less comfortable and satisfied in some social contexts.

Therefore, other aspects of physical self-concept might be influenced by contextual changes in the lives of young people. For example, it is possible that young peoples' beliefs and feelings about sporting competence may vary depending on recent experiences, such as competing successfully or unsuccessfully in some sporting task. Similarly, awareness of socio-cultural attitudes to appearance may vary depending on recent exposure to media images promoting such images or recent peer experiences. It is these mixed experiences that may provide important information about the formation and expression of physical self-concept related attributes in young people rather than just the study of the static forms of these attributes.

This thesis contends that by better understanding the complex interactions and negotiations and experiences of resistance and compliance that young people have with their bodies, insights into innovative and successful intervention strategies aimed

at increasing participation in physical activity are to be found. This contention is in keeping with Davies (1989), who argued that post-structuralism “allows me to focus on the contradictions in my experience, not as failures of rational thought but as the creative sources of new understandings, new discourses” (p.139).

Although largely focused on the experiences of women athletes, there is a growing body of literature highlighting the complex and sometimes contradictory ways that individuals negotiate experiences, views and attitudes about their bodies and gender, particularly in the context of physical activity (Davison, 2000; Drummond, 2003; George, 2005; Greenleaf, 2002; Kirk & Tinning, 1994; Krane et al., 2004; Russell, 2002). These studies often make use of the performative gender frameworks of Butler (1990) and Usser (1997) to better understand the experiences. This thesis will also make use of these frameworks and apply them to the lives of children and adolescences and their uses of their bodies in various contexts. The second study of this thesis will be informed by this important body of research as well as drawing upon the findings of study 1. Unlike the participants in much of the previous research, those in this study will not be elite or semi-elite sports people, but rather a mix of male and female young people who participate in different degrees and types of physical activity.

Rationale for Study 2

Few studies have considered the experiences and negotiations of young people at the intersection of individual physicality, gender and physical activity. The experiences of adolescent and pre-adolescent children is of particular interest as this is the developmental period when identity formation is central and the influence of peers

is high. It is also a time when young people establish romantic relationships, future goals and behavioural patterns such as physical activity (e.g., Brown, 1990; Eccles, 1999; Radzik et al., 2002).

The findings of study 1 suggest that young people are engaging in self-objectification, girls more so than boys. Young people are also aware of, and ascribe to, societal expectations and ideals of appearance, particularly as they pertain to thinness and muscularity. Furthermore, during pre-adolescence, larger numbers of children are still participating in physical activity at sufficient levels. However, from about 11 to 12 years, participation decreases with age. The eight to 18 year old developmental window, therefore, provides an ideal time to examine the complex body-related experiences and negotiations made by young people engaged in varying degrees of physical activities.

Furthermore, the experiences of young people have rarely been considered using the framework of performative gender as described by Usner (1997). This framework is hoped to provide a social constructivist and feminist based understanding of the many negotiations that young people make in regards to their bodies.

Eliciting Information about Young Peoples' Perspectives

The use of art and drawing has been suggested as a creative way of seeking children's' views and opinions on a variety of issues from chronic disease to physical activity (e.g., Sartain, Clarke, & Heyman, 2000; Sharpe, Greaney, Royce & Fields., 2000). For example, Sharpe et al., (2000) used drawings with six to 14 year olds to investigate young peoples' perceptions of physical activity in their communities. In that study, participants were given simple instructions by a researcher to draw a community physical activity and asked to add a slogan to promote it. The subsequent

drawings were subject to qualitative analysis. According to Koppitz (1983), drawings are non-verbal forms of language and communication, and as such, are able to be subject to the same types of analysis as other kinds of qualitative data.

Sartain et al. (2000) reveal how the use of drawings is a practical means for engaging young people in discussion about their experiences. Drawings create practical opportunities for further questioning about the young person's perspective. Questions can include "what have you drawn here?", "What is this person doing?", "How does this person feel?" They are useful for eliciting continuing accounts of participants' experiences.

Other researchers have used drawings to elicit research information from adult participants (Weber, & Mitchell, 1996; Warburton & Sanders, 1996). For example, McLean, Henson, & Hiles (2003) used drawings to evaluate university students' perceptions of new curriculum methods. The researchers believed that use of drawings allowed students to represent experiences as a metaphor, capable of expressing experiences and contradictions otherwise difficult to put into words.

Aims

Study 2 aims to move from the quantitative focus of study 1 to an in-depth understanding of young peoples' perceptions and experiences of their physical bodies by exploring their real life lived experiences using a descriptive interpretive approach. It does this by examining their physical experiences within the various contexts in which young people of both genders live their lives – at home, at school, with friends, family and peers. This study builds on the quantitative findings of study 1 in the area of physical self-concept and includes detailed explorations of participants' feelings and beliefs regarding their bodies and the bodies of others. It also examines the relationships between the beliefs and societal attitudes about what is ideal. In addition,

the study also seeks to gain a better understanding of contextual factors that may impact on children's' perceptions and experiences of their physicality and physical self-concept, taking into consideration gender and developmental issues. Experiences of contradiction and negotiation are examined using a framework of gendered performance as described by Usser (1997). The current study enables the lived experiences and perceptions of children and young people aged eight to 18 years to be examined in greater detail than can be done using purely quantitative research methodologies.

Method

Participants

Participants were 12 primary and high school students from the Hunter Region of New South Wales, ranging in age from eight to 18 years. Equal numbers of girls and boys participated in the study. The age grouping used in the first study was repeated and four participants, two of each gender were represented in each of the age divisions. Participants attended a mix of public and independent schools and an institute of Technical and Further Education (TAFE).

A convenience sample was used for this study. Parents and their children were recruited indirectly through persons known to the researcher. All resided or had recently resided in the Hunter region of New South Wales. Initially, parents were asked for their permission for their children to participate and then the young people were also asked to give their assent to participate. Only one child declined to take part in the study.

Materials

A semi-structured interview was the primary measure used to collect data from the participants in this study. In addition, two questionnaires from the first study were also administered to collect demographic and physical activity information from participants and their parents. These two questionnaires were sent home to parents along with plain language information and consent forms after initial contact. Parents/guardians were asked to complete these two questionnaires with their child/ren and provide them to the researcher at the time of interview.

Demographic and Physical Activity Questions

The demographic questions used in study 2 were identical to those used in study 1 (see Appendix A). Study 2 retained only the use of the World Health Organisation Physical Activity questions (see Appendix C).

Semi-Structured Interview

A semi-structured interview was developed based on the findings of the prior study and the existing literature incorporating the research questions (see Appendix L). This interview was facilitated by giving each child/adolescent the following instructions:

I would like you to draw me a picture or a couple of pictures that tell me about the thing or things that are important to you about your body. This could be anything at all that is important to you about your body. It might be something about how your body looks, and/or what you can do with it and/or how it feels or it might be something else different altogether. It is entirely up to you what you draw. When you have finished I will ask you to tell me about the drawing/s you have done and I will ask you some other questions about your drawing/s and the things you tell me. It

doesn't matter if you are a good drawer or not, and you can draw using any style or type of pictures that you like. Just draw a picture that makes sense to you. You can take as long as you like.

The interview then involved asking participants to explain their drawings. This was followed by clarifying and probing questions regarding the drawing and the narrative provided. Areas of interest in the interview included; the things that were important to participants about their bodies, the reasons for and times of change to the important issues, their feelings about their bodies, changes they desired about their bodies, the perceived impact of any changes and their considered ideal bodies for young people their same age (see Appendix L for the complete interview schedule). Most questions were open in nature.

The semi-structured interview schedule undertook several refinements in order to ensure that it was appropriate in content and delivery for young people as young as eight years. The content of the questions was based strongly on the earlier studies of Krane et al. (2004) and Russell (2002) who have both explored the lived experiences of athletic women and their feelings and perceptions about their bodies. Their findings indicate that context has a strong influence of women's experiences and perceptions of their bodies and thus this information was incorporated into the interview proforma for the current study. It was piloted on four young people between the ages of six and 12 years, following which modifications were made. In several instances, language was simplified, questions were modified and examples were added to ensure that the interview was conducted in an age-appropriate and understandable way. The interviewer had extensive experience in working with young people within these age ranges as a practicing psychologist. The questionnaires were also reviewed by the researcher's supervisors, both of whom were experienced in

qualitative research. Semi-structure interviews were chosen as they allowed the researcher to explore new areas not previously considered important but identified as such by the participants. Probing questions were used to help participants expand on their answers when they provided only short, succinct pieces of information. This was considered particularly helpful for the younger participants who may have had limited experiences in being interviewed about any topics.

Procedure

Parents of potential participants were initially contacted by telephone and asked about their interest in participating in the study. After they verbally expressed interest, they were mailed information regarding the study. A face-to-face meeting was arranged with each of them and their child in a location convenient to them, most often their home or the home of a friend. The mailed out package included plain English statements about the aims and purposes of the study (adult and young persons' versions – Appendix M & N), consent and assent forms (see Appendix O & P) as well as the two questionnaires. Prior to the meeting, the parents and young person were asked to complete the demographic and physical activity questionnaires together.

On meeting with each of the parents/guardians and the young people who consented to participation, the interviewer repeated the explanation of the aims and purposes by reading aloud from the information sheets. Written assent was collected.

When a suitably private area was identified to interview a young person alone, the semi-structure interview was conducted. The interview began by asking a young person to complete a drawing/s using the art materials supplied. They were instructed to do a drawing or drawings that showed things that were important to them about their body. They were informed that what they drew was up to them and this could be

anything at all that was important to them about their body, for example, how it looked, how it felt or how they use it. It could be something else. It could be anything that they thought was important. They were also informed that the style or quality of their drawing was not the focus of the study; rather the drawing should simply reflect their perspective on their body.

Once the drawing/s was completed the young person was asked to explain it/them to the researcher who used probing and clarifying questions to facilitate the description as required. The interviewer also asked questions based on the drawings, the findings of the previous study and the existing literature on this topic. For example, each participant was asked about any changes that context made to their experience with their body – “What about when you are with your friends/peers/family/at school? Are the same things important to you about your body when you are with your friends? Anything that would be different?” Other questions asked included “What would be some words to describe how you feel about your body?”, “Do your feelings about your body stay the same or do they sometimes change?” Questions were also asked about desired body changes and the attributes of the ‘ideal’ girl and boy their own age. Appendix L contains the full interview schedule.

Each interview took approximately 30 to 60 minutes to complete, varying with the talkativeness of the young person involved. Each was audio-taped for later transcription. The researcher was present at all times to explain the task and provide assistance as required.

Data Gathering and Analysis

Guided drawing processes and individual interviews were used to elicit information about what participants thought was important regarding their bodies. This changed according to context. Each interview was audio-taped and then

transcribed. When audio equipment partially failed during two interviews, researcher notes taken during and after the interviews were used. In accordance with quantitative research methods, the researcher took field notes both during and after all the interviews. These were considered as legitimate data sources (Stommel & Wills, 2003).

Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) was used to analyse the data from this study (see Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006 for a full review). Data were coded using the methods of grounded theory described by Strauss and Corbin (1998). CGT, as conceived by Charmaz (2000), builds on the ideas of grounded theory but differs from it in that the data is not presumed to contain absolute truths. CGT purports that multiple perspectives are always available, including that of the pre-existing literature (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and the researcher who has their own perspectives and values (Appleton, 1997; Charmaz, 2000; de Laine, 1997; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Stratton, 1997).

In accordance with CGT, each transcript was read and re-read before being coded into multi-ordered themes. The process was repeated independently by two other researchers (the supervisor and co-supervisor) who were experienced in the thematic coding of qualitative data and who were familiar with the relevant research literature. Areas of difference were reviewed until consensus was reached. Overall, category coding and extraction of themes by the three researchers were very similar. Differences in coding were minor and each was reviewed and discussed by the three researchers until consensus was reached. It was not necessary to omit any interview data due to lack of consensus.

Participants' direct quotes have been used to report results. Superfluous words have been excluded for ease of reading; however, this procedure has not altered the meaning of participants' statements.

Study 2 Results and Discussion

Demographic and Descriptive Characteristics

The study included 12 participants, two participants of each gender, in each of the age groups under consideration. The male participants were aged eight years (Kevin), 10 years (Damien), 11 years (Luke), 14 years (James), 16 years (Trevor) and 17 years (Karl). The female participants were aged nine years (Zetta), 10 years (Mikki), 11 years (Gina), 13 years (Trea), 15 years (Lisa) and 16 years (Katie). Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of participants.

All participants identified Australia as their country of birth. Ethnic background answers indicated that most participants were of English/Anglo descent. Three participants indicated ancestry of other European backgrounds while two participants indicated Pacific Islander (Karl, 17 years) or Asian Pacific heritage (Katie, 16 years). One participant identified as Aboriginal Australian (Zetta, 9 years). No participants spoke languages other than English at home.

Participants all attended public primary or secondary schools. One participant, Karl (17 years), was not at school but was attending a TAFE college (Technical and Further Education college) part-time.

All of the boys in study 2 indicated that they were adequately physically active. Two of the girls (Trea (13) and Mikki (10 years)) were assessed as adequately physically active and three were not. One female participant (Zetta (9 years)) did not provide this information.

Using the Centre for Disease Control, BMI-For-Age classification system, (2004) two boys were classified as having a 'healthy' BMI (James (14 years) and Trevor (16 years)), two were at risk of being overweight (Karl (17 years) and Luke (11 years)) while the remaining two boys were overweight (Kevin (8 years) and

Damien (10 years)). Three girls were at risk of being overweight (Gina (11 years), Lisa (15 years), and Katie (16 years)) while two girls were in the healthy weight range (Zetta (9 years) and Mikki (10 years)). One girl declined to provide information on her weight (Trea (13)).

A summary of the participants is provided as follows:

1. Kevin was an 8 year old boy in year 2 of primary school. He was born in Australia and was of Anglo/ English background. He was classified as being overweight but was adequately physically active. He enjoyed playing with his friends at school as his main form of physical activity. He was talkative and excitable throughout the interview.
2. Damien was a 10 year old boy in year 4 of primary school. He was born in Australia and of Anglo/ European background. He was classified as being overweight but was adequately physically active. At the time of the interview he was on crutches due to an ankle injury and was awaiting an operation. Although he was not supposed to be weight bearing he was observed running around with peers as best he could on his crutches before and after the interview. His carer reported that he still participated in physical activity as much as possible but this often lead to incapacitating pain for a day or so afterwards. He was talkative throughout the interview.
3. Luke was an 11 year old boy in year 5 of primary school. He was born in Australia and was of Anglo/English/ European background. He was adequately physically active and was classified as being at risk of being overweight. Luke reported enjoying running and playing rugby union. Luke

provided on short answers to most questions and gave little elaboration, even when prompted. He tentatively raised in his interview that he would like to not be so “big”.

4. James was a 14 year old boy in year 9 of high school. James was born in Australia and was of an Anglo/European background. He was adequately physically active and in the healthy weight range. James talked a lot about his passion for off-road BMX riding and the extensive range of injuries he had sustained pursuing this passion. He also raised the issue of his skin and how he felt people treated him negatively because of his acne.
5. Trevor was a 16 year old boy in year 9 of high school. He was born in Australia and of an Anglo/English background. He was adequately physically active and in the healthy weight range. Trevor was talkative throughout the interview. He had recently had glandular fever and had also sustained an injury to his ribs while bike riding. He appeared to be very conscious of the appearance of his ribs and the skinniness of his body and how others reacted to this. He was trying to improve his fitness and conditioning, primarily though on-road bike riding.
6. Kane was a 16 year old boy who is currently attending TAFE. He was born in Australia and was of a Pacific Islander background. Karl was adequately physically active and at risk of being overweight. He reported enjoying playing rugby league football and bike riding with his friends. He was talkative throughout the interview and spoke a lot about the impact of his larger than usual body size and early physical development on himself and others.

7. Zetta was a 9 year old girl in year 3 of primary school. She was born in Australia and of an Aboriginal background. She did not provide information about her physical activity levels and was in the healthy weight range. Zetta was talkative throughout the interview but at times was difficult to understand and her responses often became tangential. She reported enjoying playing mostly with same-sex friends and avoided playing with boys because of how they treated her when she did.
8. Mikki was a 10 year old girl in year 4 in primary school. She was born in Australia and of an Anglo/English background. She was adequately physically active and in the normal range according to her BMI. Mikki played competitive tennis and at the time of the interview had just returned from a three day tennis camp. Mikki's primary social group appeared to be very separate from her tennis. Mikki was talkative throughout the interview.
9. Gina was an 11 year old girl in year 6 at primary school. She was born in Australia and of an Anglo/English/European background. Gina was not adequately physically active and was classified as being at risk of being overweight. Gina was quietly spoken throughout the interview and did not elaborate much on her answers. She is a sibling to Lisa who was also interviewed. Gina has several other older sisters who place high level sports. She commented several times in the interview about her height. Other family members were also observed at the time of interview and they all appeared to be shorter than average.
10. Trea was a 13 year old girl in year 7 of high school. Trea was born in Australia and was of an Anglo/English background. She was classified as being adequately physically active but did not provide information about her

weight so a BMI classification could not be made. She was given the opportunity to weigh herself privately at the time of the interview but declined to do so. Trea was quiet throughout the interview and didn't elaborate on her answers even when prompted. She thought that everybody's body was the best and that a person's most important qualities were unrelated to their looks and reflected their character.

11. Lisa was a 15 year old girl in year 10 of high school. Lisa was born in Australia and was of an Anglo/English/European background. She was not adequately physically active and was classified as being at risk of being overweight. Lisa was an older sibling to Gina. Lisa was talkative throughout the interview. Lisa had little interest in physical activity but thought looking fit and health was important. She also appeared particularly concerned about presenting the right physical appearance to others. Both Lisa and her sibling appeared shorter than average in height.

12. Katie was a 16 year old girl in year 11 of high school. Katie was born in Australia and was of an Asian/Pacific background. She was not adequately physically active and was classified as being at risk of being overweight. Katie was an articulate participant who reflected a lot on the presentation and uses of her body. She enjoyed dancing and used it as a mode of personal expression.

The participants in study 2 represented different demographics to the first study in several ways. Firstly, as students of public schools, participants in study 2 were not receiving religious messages in their schooling to the same extent as those found in study 1. Research indicates that receiving religious affirmations may impact on participants overall levels of body satisfaction (e.g., Boyatzis et al., 2007; Boyatziz

& Walsh, 2006; Mahoney et al., 2005). Secondly, the boys in the second study were all participating in adequate amounts of physical activity, unlike those in study 1. Therefore, study 2 does not represent the views of inadequately physically active young males. The sample of girls in study 2 included those who were adequately physically active and those who were not, and so responses may be viewed as more representative of the general population.

Finally, study 2 did not include any males or females who were underweight, but did include male participants in the other three categories and girls in the 'healthy' and 'at risk of overweight' BMI classification range. As a result, perspectives of underweight young people have not been captured nor have those of overweight girls. Overall, these qualitative results provide insight into the lives and experiences of young people with different backgrounds and physical activity habits.

Themes and Codes

The semi-structured interviews used in study 2 elicited participants' perspectives on six areas of experience. These focus areas were generated using previous research and data from study 1 as a guide. The researcher's questions reflected the major focus areas and constituted the first order themes in study 2. These questions included participants' views of:

1. the important aspects of their bodies
2. changes that can occur to what participants think are important about their bodies
3. their feelings about their bodies
4. the changes they would make to their bodies if possible

5. the perceived impact of changes
6. the characteristics of ideal girl and boy bodies for young people of similar ages

Lower order themes were identified. They are summarised diagrammatically in Figures 11 to 18 and are described and discussed in detail.

Important Aspects of Participants' Bodies

Participants' responses about what was important to them about their bodies fell under four second order themes – (1) physical appearance, (2) functionality, (3) identity or character and (4) sensation. Physical appearance dominated these responses and was identified as being of central importance to girls and the boys of all ages. Numerous authors have highlighted the centrality of physical appearance to girls in the current cultural climate (e. g. Bordo, 1990; Brumberg, 1997; Brace-Gaven, 2002). Authors such as Pope and colleagues (Pope et al., 2000a; Pope et al., 2001) highlight that similar pressures are present for young men. The central importance of physical appearance to both girls and boys is also consistent with study 1 which revealed a strong relationship between individual's ratings of body attractiveness and physical self-worth.

The importance of physical appearance was highly endorsed by most participants in study 2 and five related third order themes including body size, body shape, clothing, body parts and image were identified. Many fourth order themes were also identified. For example, body size consisted of three further sub-themes - weight, muscle and height. Analysis of interviews revealed conformity to many dominant discourses about femininity and masculinity, thinness and muscularity. However, there were also instances of resistance. In addition, both boys and girls responses highlighted the complex task of needing to find the correct 'balance' of arbitrarily

defined physical appearance qualities. Constant monitoring of the physical self and the physical bodies of others while seeking this balance was identified as the perfect breeding ground for lived self-objectification. While this was expected for girls, given their ongoing exposure to objectifying experiences throughout their lives, it was present but unexpected for boys. This finding is consistent with Frost's (2003) assertion that growing consumerism has resulted in the dominance of the 'visual' body to all people in the Western World.

Physical activity was the next most strongly endorsed theme for the boys. This was anticipated given the contribution that physical activity has been found to make to the gendered identity of boys and men (Drummond, 2001, 2003; Messner, 2002; Rowe & McKay, 1998; Whitson, 1990). While the girls in this study also identified the importance of physical activity to their lives, it was not as dominant and differed in several ways to experiences of the boys. For girls, physical activity has often been found to have a more complex relationship with gendered identity (Choi, 2000; George, 2005; Krane et al., 2004; Russell, 2002).

The overall theme of functionality was also broken down into a large number of related third, fourth and fifth order themes such as specific sports and the perceived benefits of physical activity. Each of these themes and subsequent sub-themes are summarized further in this section.

The second order theme of identity/character revealed important information about the gender related discourses informing the experiences of young people in this study. For the older boys, identity was not linked to mainstream organised sports such as football as expected, but rather to bike riding, a recreational physical activity. The preferred gendered identity was that of a 'risk-taker', someone who performs dangerous and extreme physical acts and who continues despite injury. For the girls in

this study, identity/character was not as strongly tied to physical activity as a functional ability, but rather tended to conform to more popular discourses about femininity as it related to consumerism, relationships and caring for others.

Physical sensation was revealed as a weak second order theme, endorsed by only a small number of individuals. It was always connected to physical activity for boys and girls and provided small but important exceptions to participants' experiences unconnected to physical appearance. These experiences were free from comparison with others and reflected an acute awareness of the body's internal and external states. The nature and importance of sensory experiences was difficult for participants to describe and quantify. Interviews revealed these as pleasurable experiences that were largely ignored and rarely discussed.

The relationships between second order themes, particularly physical appearance, functionality and identity/character were immensely complex. Areas of importance identified by participants often had multiple aspects and meanings. For example, the third order theme of health was identified as important to participants as a result of its contribution to physical appearance (looking 'fit and healthy'), functionality (having and maintaining a healthy body) and its contribution to identity (being a healthy person). The framework of performative gender provided a useful one for understanding participants' sometimes contradictory experiences and beliefs.

Data analysis revealed some gender differences in what participants identified as important to them about their bodies; however, there were more similarities than differences. For example, both boys and girls identified physical appearance and physical activity as important to them. Many of the observed gender differences occurred at the lower levels of thematic coding and will be discussed as pertinent.

Developmental differences in the interview data frequently reflected different manifestations of the same theme rather than two different themes. For example, both younger and older participants thought that physical activity was of central importance to their lives; however, the younger participants were more likely to identify unstructured playing as a way they did this. Older participants often did this in more formalized or organised ways. Therefore, while the lower order lived experiences of particular themes differed in the younger and old participants, the higher order themes remained consistent.

Theme of Appearance

In line with study 1 and the previous research, study 2 revealed that the majority of participants identified their bodies' physical appearance as of central importance. The aspects of physical appearance identified as important to both boys and girls included having an acceptable and attractive overall body shape, body size and individual body parts (see Figure 10). Clothing was identified as important to participants' appearances, particularly, but not exclusively by the girls, who associated it with projecting an appropriate and sexualized image of femininity. The projection of a feminine 'image' was important to girls while many boys sought a physical appearance that conveyed an identity of a risk-taker. These constituted unique third order themes. Authors such as Pope and colleagues have cited mostly indirect evidence that physical appearance is of growing importance to boys and men. Its importance was described explicitly by the boys in this study. For example, several boys' highlighted the importance of achieving the right balance of body size and shape.

Fourth and fifth order themes were often found in the data and the inter-relationships between all themes associated with physical appearance was complex.

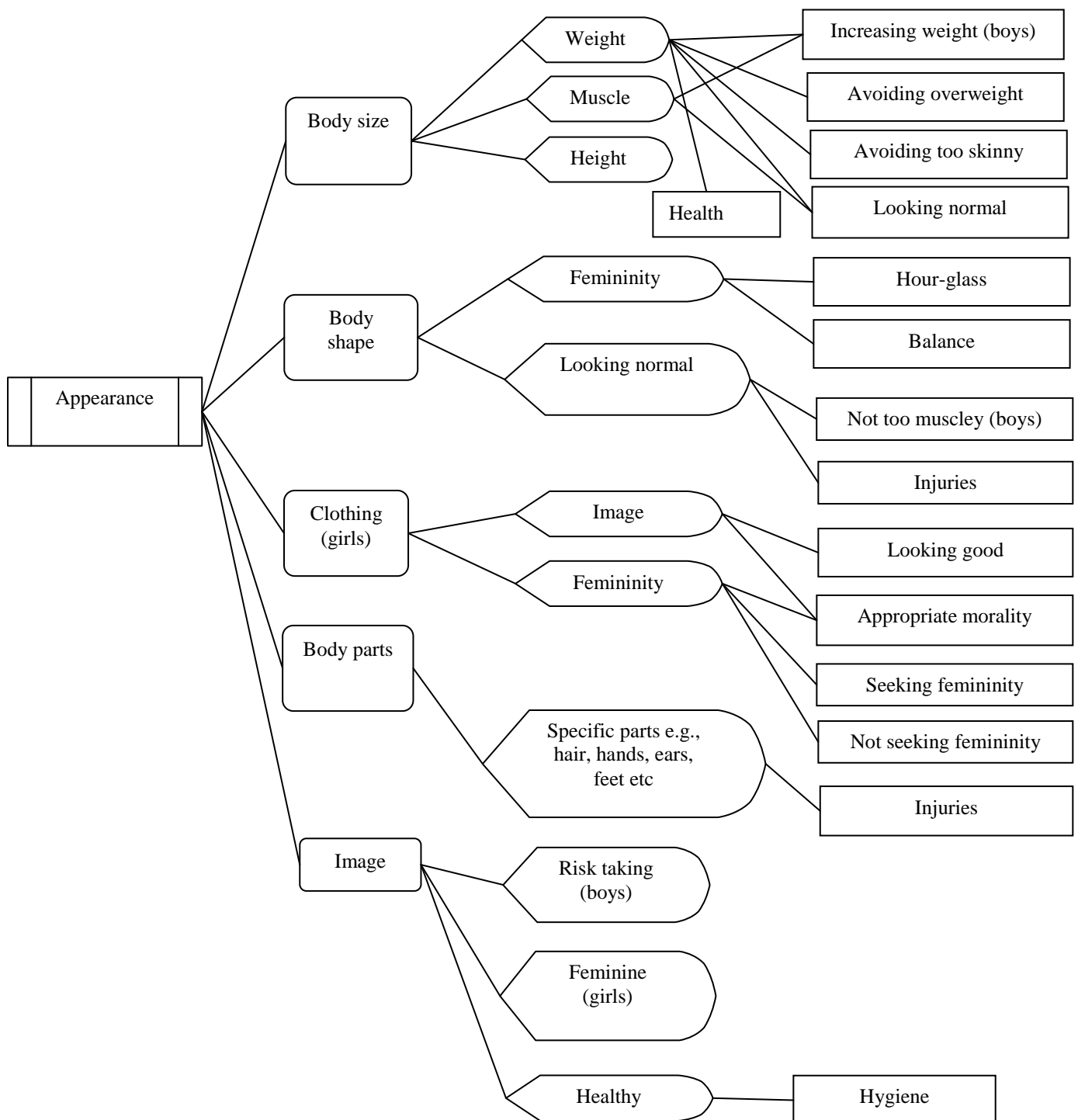


Figure 10. Themes attributed to the importance of appearance.

The themes associated with the importance of physical appearance are best summarized in Figure 10. Each of these themes will be discussed in the following section.

Body Size. Body size was identified as important to male and female participants. It was expected that girls would explicitly express the desire for thinness. In the study both boys and girls spoke frequently about the importance of not being overweight, obese or fat. The desire for thinness was predominantly implied. Boys and girls of all ages stressed the need to obtain the correct balance, not just in body size but in overall physical appearance, the exact definition of which was never specifically defined. This was observed through the use of qualifying statements about certain qualities e.g., skinny but not too skinny. Some boys desired heavier, more muscular bodies in order to improve looks. Unlike previous studies (e.g., Pope et al., 2001), the muscular desired was limited in size.

Few participants in study 2, male or female, directly identified concerns that they were overweight. However, many participants stated that they wanted to avoid being overweight or obese.

Mikki (10 years): I am just trying ... lots of sports and trying to be a bit healthy so I don't get a bit overweight...

Lisa (15 years)... just looking presentable and healthy and not too scrawny looking or like really obese

Interviewer: So not going to either extreme by the sound of it is pretty important

Lisa (15 years): Yeah

Interviewer: Is there some things about how your body looks that are important?

Luke (11 years): ...I don't really care but sometimes I, ummm, just feel like I wanna be, ummm, thinner.

James (14 years): Going back to being obese again ...everyone looks at you heaps differently...and...at school... we got a couple of obese kids 'n stuff, and they just get ripped off heaps. So it's kind of good not to get to that state.

James (14 years) highlighted the social costs of being overweight or obese in his experience. At his school overweight or obese children are frequently teased which is consistent with research findings (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2002) and with the perceptions of other adolescents who also feel that fat children are more likely to be teased than thin students (Greenleaf et al., 2006). James surmised that people can avoid being teased by not allowing themselves to become overweight, inadvertently. This finding hints at consistency with wider societal discourses and beliefs that overweight people are lazy or lacking in will power and could change their weight if they only they tried (Bordo, 1993; Crandell & Martinez, 1996; DeJong & Kleck, 1981).

In this study, avoidance of being overweight consistently reflects individuals' attempts to avoid the perceived negative gaze of others but in doing so it simultaneously invites continual self monitoring. Even adequately physically active individuals who are in the healthy weight classification range, such as Mikki (10 years) and James (14 years), appears to be engaging in this form of self-monitoring, lest they be identified as 'fat'. These behaviours may reflect lived experiences of self-

objectification whereby societal ideals about the values of thinness and fatness are internalized by individuals who go on to actively self monitor lest they transgress these ideals by appearing overweight. Personal transgressions of these discourses are not necessary to ensure compliance; observation of the transgressions of others would be a sufficient deterrent.

This issue is further complicated by the nature of the alternative expectations, specifically the demand that individuals not be overweight or 'too' skinny. Neither of these expectations provides clear definition of what is acceptable in body appearance, only what is unacceptable. It is difficult for participants to know when they are meeting expectations as boundaries are only clear when they have been violated and are revealed through teasing. This complex situation is discussed in greater detail later in this section.

Like avoidance of other traits such as being too skinny, looking 'normal' in physical appearance comparative to others was also a priority for girls and boys. Participants thought it important not to stand out from others in particular ways, particularly in ways relating to weight as seen in the experiences of Trevor (16 years) who felt himself too skinny. Tinning and Kirk (1994) also identified the desire to look normal as important to girls and boys in the context of high school Physical Education (PE) classes. Achieving normality had direct links to how self-objectification might be lived by the young people in this study. For example, achieving normality demands that participants consistently monitor the appearance of others in the search for idealized body presentations. These presentations must then be adopted by the individual. Ongoing monitoring of themselves and others is needed to

avoid transgressions and to seek updates to the ideals. Negative outcomes are possible through the engagement of the externalised view of the self as seen in self-objectification as well as through failure to achieve ideals.

Indirect references to the importance of weight occurred among participants in study 2. Body weight was identified as a fitness or health issue by several participants. Closer examination of responses revealed that many health factors were secondary to appearance issues. 'Health' for several girls and one boy reflected a desire to not appear overweight or obese.

Lisa (15 years): Feeling healthy and strong [is important]. Feeling healthy, making sure I'm not morbidly obese...just healthy really.

Interviewer: How would I know that you are healthy... for example?

Lisa (15 years): I'm eating a salad, looking presentable and healthy and not too scrawny looking or really obese.

Mikki (10 years): I am just trying... lots of sports and trying a bit healthy so I don't get a bit overweight...

Interviewer: ...why is [being fit] important to you?

Luke (11 years): ... just so I can stay healthy and... not being as big.

Therefore, interpreting participants' desire to be 'fit' and 'healthy' as a function driven response may be erroneous as it may better reflect an appearance based desire. This finding has implications for measures such as the SOQ and PSPP-CY. For example, the SOQ considers endorsement of the items 'health' and 'physical fitness' to reflect non-observable, functional traits that contribute strongly to an individual's

physical self-concept. However, study 2 responses suggest that for some participants the terms 'fit' and 'healthy' are more closely linked to physical appearance qualities, that they mean, 'looking' healthy by being thin, toned and not fat, rather than actually 'being healthy' i.e. cardio-vascular fitness. This association may result in a distortion of SOQ scores, erroneously underestimating self-objectification.

The interpretation of participants' responses in this way is further supported by the absence of descriptions of physical health benefits by most participants in study 2. This interpretation is also consistent with the prior research of Sharpe et al., (2000) who found girl participants more likely than boy participants to draw representations of 'slimness and/or fitness' in their drawings of community physical activity. In that research these terms were used interchangeably. Greenleaf (2002) also revealed that many ex-athletes included physical descriptions of their bodies deemed to reflect fitness. For example, one participant in that study described fitness as "including feeling strong, having certain ribs that stuck out, having collarbones that stuck out, looking gaunt through her cheeks, and fitting into certain clothes" (*p.* 69) and "that meant my stomach being perfectly flat and my thighs looking like they were fit and ready to go" (*p.* 70). Kirk and Tinning (1994) have also noted the tendency for individuals to associate slenderness with fitness and health.

Furthermore, the use of terms such as 'fit and healthy' may provide males with an acceptable language to discuss their body related concerns about weight. Grogan and Richards (2002) found that boys and men considered gym work geared towards improving physical appearance 'vain' and less acceptable than body work undertaken with the aim of improving fitness and health. These attitudes may make terms such as 'fit' and 'healthy' a more acceptable way to talk about the same issues.

Finally, using terms such as 'fit' and 'healthy' to represent appearance qualities may reflect the increasing commercialization of the health and fitness industries which frequently uses such coded terms to improve the marketability of its products. Various discourses, for example, about masculinity and thinness, may make the adoption of these terms more attractive to participants. This issue requires further consideration through research and will be raised again later in the discussion.

Consistent with previous research, comments from the older male participants reflected their desire to be heavier; that is, to increase their weight through muscle gain and but avoid excessive fatness (e.g., Cohane & Pope, 2001; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Pope et al., 2000a; Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001; Smolak et al., 2001). However, unlike earlier research study 2 found that some fat was identified as an acceptable base on which to build muscle (Grogan & Richards, 2002).

Although several boys desired increased weight, they had a range of reasons for it. Trevor (16 years), hoped muscle and weight gain would help to conceal an old injury that he felt self conscious about. He also hoped a weight gain of 20 kilograms on his chest and abdomen, consisting of a base level of fat covered by muscle, would prevent teasing from others and stop them calling him a 'stick' when he removed his shirt. He was already using a dietary supplement and bike riding to assist him to achieve his goal.

Trevor (16 years): ...If I put more weight and muscle on I'd probably just be alright. I could probably just blend in. I don't think people would really bother me that much.

Karl (17 years) also wished to put on 20 kilograms but desired muscle as a base layer with fat as a covering layer. Karl reported that he was already targeted for aggression by other males due to his large physical appearance. He thought that body fat might help camouflaging his already larger than usual frame and make him look less threatening.

Interviewer: If you could change something or some things about your body what would you change?

Karl (17 years):... Probably just muscle...Bulk up a little bit

Trevor (16 years) and Karl (17 years) are engaging with multiple societal discourses regarding masculinity and muscularity with acts of simultaneous adoption and rejection. Trevor engages with discourses calling boys to look and be big and strong through the acquisition of muscles. However, he diverges from these same discourses by raising concerns about looking too skinny, having odd looking ribs and by caring that others might tease him. In Grogan and Richards (2002) study, such behaviours would have been seen as 'unmasculine' and 'vain' due to the desire to improve appearance. Trevor's descriptions suggest the adoption of a discourse already in circulation for girls. It says that physical appearance is important and working on your body demonstrates that you care about yourself. Masculine connotations of 'working on your body' may now provide boys like Trevor with an acceptable masculine referent, as it is acceptable for men to 'work hard' in other aspects of their lives. Karl's (17 years) resistance is different. He resists aspects of hegemonic masculinity easily available to him as it relates to aggression and physical domination, while simultaneously engaging in other gendered discourses reinforcing the importance of physical size and muscularity to boys. If a performative gender

framework similar to that proposed by Usser (1997) was to be applied, Karl might be seen as both simultaneously 'being' boy and 'resisting' boy, whereas Trevor is more classically 'being' boy despite his resistance to some traditional male discourses. In such a framework, being boy might be described in individuals who adopt and embody traditional hegemonic masculine roles such as being strong, tough and athletic. Their relationship to women would be patriarchal and, in the sports world, women would be supporters, spectators and cheerleaders. Being a 'modern' boy would include these traditional hegemonic roles and beliefs but would also include the addition of other negative aspects usually associated with women, such as having a focus on the importance of physical appearance and good looks. This conceptualisation would include the performances of boys who are participants in non-mainstream activities and who value strength, skill, and the ability to overcome pain. These boys treat their bodies as innate objects – machines. In some cases their bodies can also be sources of derision and locate them as victims of modern feminism. This version of being boy will be discussed further in the thesis.

None of the girls in study 2 made reference to muscles as an important appearance quality. The absence of this finding was unexpected, given that current hegemonic ideals for women include a well toned body presentation (e.g., Brumberg, 1997; Choi, 2000; Markula, 1995). Like earlier findings, this resistance to dominant societal ideals may simply reflect the ever changing nature of hegemonic ideals or sub-cultural differences for young people rather than a challenge to underlying beliefs or discourses related to femininity and beauty.

Several participants felt that their height was important to their overall appearance. Previous studies have found that for men tallness is valued socially and professionally (Bonuso, 1983; Hensley & Cooper, 1987; Lechelt, 1975; Shepperd &

Strathman, 1989). For women, increased height is represented in the hegemonic ideals of models. However, none of the participants in this study appeared to conform fully to these expectations. Katie (16 years) was happy being a shorter than average. However, Katie's value in her short height was related its usefulness in concealing the perceived shortcomings of her body shape.

Katie (16 years): I am very comfortable with my height and although I like wearing heels, I feel uncomfortable when I am taller than I normally am... [I] think being taller sort of accentuates my body and I can hide more easily when I am shorter.

Katie actively manipulated and minimised her height by avoiding wearing shoes whenever possible. She believed that doing this resulted in fewer opportunities for negative surveillance from others, but it did not stop her from monitoring herself, a key feature of self-objectification. Authors such as Malson (1999) might consider Katie's strategies a literal and metaphorical attempt to reduce herself to nothing. Alternatively, Katie may be simply attempting to distract attention from her body (Kissing, 1991).

Therefore, failures to comply with dominant discourses about beauty do not necessarily reflect a total rejection of such beliefs but rather ascription to another equally unhealthy dominant discourse. Adoption of this view leaves women's feelings about themselves and ways of viewing their bodies, unaffected.

Karl (17 years) also considered height and musculature important as he perceived it to cause substantial problems for him. At 188cm he found his size often got him labelled as a trouble maker or aggressive at first sight. Other young males regularly provoked him, seeking a fight.

Karl (17 years): One thing I really hate and I really wish people would stop doing this. When I walk up, or when they see me, they turn to their friend and say, "Well here comes trouble" or something like that just because of the sheer size of me.

To decrease his size, Karl consciously used particular behavioural strategies such as slouching, with the hope that it would decrease aggression directed towards him. Early physical maturation resulted in ambivalence about his body's physical appearance but he was also likely impacted by his ethnic background. Dominate discourses and stereotypes that depict big muscular men as aggressive and dominating may have been compounded by other discourses about Torres Strait Islander men being wild/native, dangerous and violent. Instead of using these gendered and racial stereotypes to his own advantage, Karl actively resisted these discourses in his behaviour and his attitudes to violence and fighting. Within a framework of performative gender, Karl would be seen as 'resisting' boy on these occasions.

Body Shape. Overall body shape and finding the correct balance of physical features were identified as important to the older girls, and to some of the boys. The older girls' concerns about body shape is consistent with the literature that suggests that, as girls physically mature, they are pulled further from societal ideals, particularly of thinness (Schur et al., 2000; Smolak & Levine, 1996). However, boys' concerns about excessive musculature are consistent with the previous literature and with more general findings that boys are increasingly interested in their physical appearance.

Having a feminine body shape was important to the oldest female in the study (Katie, 16 years). She made many references to it throughout her interview.

Katie (16 years): I guess for me [what's important to me about my body] would be the smaller waist and big hips, that hourglass figure...It is the typical feminine part of the body that girls are expected to have. A small waist and a flat stomach ... [The] silhouette in that area is important to me because I don't like how mine is...But then I don't necessarily think it's a weight thing but I think it's my ribcage that put things out of whack there... That bit's important but I am really self-conscious about it.

Katie (16 years): I am always trying to downsize. I wear black up the top because I am always trying to downsize the top half and accentuate the bottom half because I like that silhouette better...

Katie adopted strategies for maximizing her desired figure. By wearing specific clothes she was able to highlight the parts of her body that she wished to enhance and minimized the parts she did not like as much.

Katie (16 years): I have fairly broad shoulders and I think that's probably the least feminine part of me, but it doesn't bother me because I feel like I can use from my legs down to be feminine. But up the top I can still be masculine because of rest of my body is feminine...

Katie's (16 years) responses support what has been regularly reported in the literature, that for girls and women, physical appearance - body shape is integral to femininity (Balsamo, 1996; Brumberg, 1997; Mazur, 1986). Katie's view of what constitutes femininity is dominated by particular physical qualities – a small waist,

bigger hips and narrow shoulders. These qualities do not reflect current hegemonic ideals which favour skinny, toned bodies, but rather reflect the ideal body of the 1950s', a figure similar to that of Marilyn Munroe, an earlier icon of feminine beauty. Katie's alternative ideal, therefore, offers a resistance to current discourses on thinness, but then replaces it with another equally appearance based ideal. Katie's appearance-based ideal means that she remains acutely aware of how her body conforms and doesn't conform to these ideals. Dichotomous language is used to describe how her body doesn't meet her feminine ideals. For example, she describes her upper body as 'masculine'. While Katie recognizes that she doesn't fully conform to her own internalized body ideal, she does counter balance this with other body presentations that she finds more acceptable. Recognizing the concurrent positives and negatives related to body shape was more evident in the experiences of several boys and will be discussed in further detail later in this section.

Looking 'normal' or comparable to others in body shape was also an important category of experience to some participants. For example, Katie (16 years) talked at length about how comparison to others strongly influenced her feelings about her body. Participants such as Trevor (16 years) and Gina (11 years) highlighted the importance of fitting or blending in, of not looking "different". Trevor felt it was acceptable to look different as long as you looked comparatively better than others.

Katie (16 years): I have a fairly weak upper torso... and I'm broad and...it feels uncomfortable around other girls who have a very small torso, a very small rib cage...because I feel really big and really masculine. Also because I am short too, I feel I am really butch when I'm around girls who are very slender. But then when I am around big people, it is more empowering to feel like I have more strength and physical capacity.

Looking normal in comparison to others provides many descriptions consistent with the lived experiences of self-objectification. Participants compare themselves to those around them, even when the others are not physically present. Thus, they reproduce the externalized gaze themselves. Some participants hope to achieve a physical appearance that will allow them to simply 'blend in'.

Only Trevor (16 years) felt that standing out was positive because he considered himself better looking than other boys at his school. Although his comparisons were favourable, they still may not be sufficient to protect him from the negative outcomes associated with habitual self monitoring and self-objectification.

It has already been mentioned that Karl desired a body shape that wasn't too muscular. Several other boys also saw this as an important aspect of normality. Trevor (16 years) wished to put on a layer of fat and then muscle to achieve normality by making corrections to his weight and chest shape. The experiences of these boys show behaviours and beliefs that closely approximate the problematic experiences and beliefs of many women.

Clothing. Clothing was important to several of the female participants. Even young girls' experiences and relationships with their clothing presented a more complex picture than that expressed by the boys. For the girls, looking attractive in their clothing was important. They also wanted their appearance to reflect their interests and certain moral values. Clothing, as it related to femininity, was identified as important to girls of different ages.

Interviewer: So what kind of clothes do you like? What's your style?

Lisa (15 years): Just dresses, feeling girly... like jewellery and skirts, make up, and having your hair done nice...

However, clothing was also important to Lisa's social and moral reputation as young women. She felt judged by her clothing and believed it was important to give the right "first impressions" to others.

Lisa (15 years): First impressions on other people and just making sure you don't look, I don't know, like a slut or something (laughter)

Interviewer: (Laughter). What would you look like if you were looking like a slut?

Lisa (15 years): A really low neckline, short skirts and belly showing a bit.

Lisa may move between positions of being girl and doing girl through this physical presentation. She appears to be consciously manipulating her physical appearance so that it doesn't read 'slutty'; however it is unclear if she truly believes that such a position does equate with being a slut.

Conversely, Mikki (10 years) used clothing to define herself as non-girly by distancing herself from clothing, such as dresses and skirts, which are usually associated with a feminine appearance. Mikki's performance may be more akin to resisting girl, whereby she may be actively distancing herself from particular dominant societal discourses about what a girl should like. She preferred clothes that reflected her 'beach' life style.

Mikki (10 years): If I am going out ... I don't really wear skirts or dresses. [I] never do. I just don't like them, because I don't like being very girly... I usually just wear jeans and a nice shirt.

Various authors have used the metaphor of the body as a 'text' that is read by others (Douglas, 1982; Bordo, 2003). Mikki's (10 years) and Lisa's (15 years) responses reflect the living out of such a theoretical assertion by some girls. Both are actively engaged in moderating their physical appearances through clothing so that their body presentations read 'girly', 'not girly' and 'not slut'. They are engaging in conscious manipulation of their appearances and attempting to portray particular moral and socio-political messages about their characters. These actions demand self monitoring to ensure conformity with their own desired presentations. They also require the monitoring of others to check for evidence of transgressions as the girls realise that they cannot control the interpretations of others.

Few boys commented on clothing. One young boy enjoyed wearing matching clothes on uniform free days at school. An older boy stated directly that clothing was not important to him. The silence of the other boys on this issue may reflect a similar position.

Damien (10 years): [I] like army clothes, camouflage clothes... They've got more than one colour and they all match together.

Therefore, Damien shows some personal resistance to popular discourses about masculinity by challenging the belief that males should not show an interest in fashion. The fact that none of the other boys expressed similar views may indicate that rather than reflecting a pervasive shift, this may be unique to Damien.

Gender differences in the lived experiences of these girls and boys may explain, in part, why girls and women have been consistently found to experience higher rates of self-objectification and its subsequent consequences than boys and men. Girls' experience with their clothes appears to be more complex than boys'.

Body Parts. Boys and girls both identified as important specific body parts they liked and were satisfied with as well as those which they disliked and with which they were dissatisfied. The interview data revealed some age group differences. Body satisfaction and physical self-concept appeared to decrease with increasing age. These points are consistent with the findings in study 1 and previous research (e.g., Hagger et al., 2004; Stein et al., 1998; Tiggemann & Wilson-Barrett, 1998).

In study 2 the younger participants were more likely to identify body parts that they liked, whereas the older participants more likely to identify body parts they disliked. For example, Damien (10 years) liked his ears while Gina liked her hair.

Damien (10 years): [Talking about ears]. They are unique to somebody else's.

Interviewer: Ok, what do you mean by that?

Damien (10 years): Like you don't have the same, like some people's ears might be big, some might be small or some might be in the middle of all that. Some might be long. Some might be shorter. Some people have earrings and some people don't.

Interviewer: Ok, so what's important to you about your ears do you think?

Damien (10 years): That I like them and the people I like like them too.

Gina (10 years): Hair could keep your head nice and warm. You can have your hair in lots of different styles.

Interviewer: ...what kind of styles do you like your hair to be in?

Gina (10 years): Just a pony tail.

Interviewer: And what do you think is important about that, having your hair in different styles?

Gina (10 years): ...if everyone just wore their hair in the same style it would be boring.

In the oldest age group, Trevor (16 years) did not like a protruding rib while Katie (16 years) and Lisa (15 years) disliked their legs and lower bodies.

Interviewer: ...your ribs and stuff are still important, but it feels different when...

Trevor (16 years): Yeah, it's still important but it doesn't really get to me that much...but it is a priority I want to fix

Lisa (15 years): I don't like exposing my body too much.

Interviewer: Okay. So the clothes, which bits do you like to have covered up?

Lisa (15 years): Probably more my legs, because I don't like my legs.

Karl (17 years) identified body hair on his torso as excessive and undesirable. Boroughs and Thompson (2002) and Boroughs, Cafri and Thompson (2005) argue that body hair below the neckline is an emerging body image issue for men and hair removal is becoming more common.

These findings in study 2, may suggest that developmental differences are present in the data however study 1 failed to find significant age differences in the boys' physical self-concept data. While they are not conclusive, the possible age differences revealed in study 2 may reflect gender differences in boys' and girls'

experiences of these constructions. For example, in study 1 physical self-concept is made up of many different domains including physical appearance as a broad category. Participants' concerns in study 2 were often very specific. However, it may also be that boys' specific concerns are overridden by concurrent satisfaction in other areas of physical appearance, whereas for girls this is not the case. Further support for this proposition will be discussed later in this section.

The qualitative data revealed that several boys challenged popular discourses of masculinity in subtle but perceivable ways, e.g., by verbalizing appearance based qualities that they disliked about themselves. In the past, this behaviour might have been interpreted as unacceptable, unmasculine and vain (Grogan and Richards, 2002). As discourses pertaining to the growing importance of attractiveness to males change, this behaviour may become more acceptable, presenting young males with a new set of challenges (e.g., Alexander, 2003; Conseur, Hathcote, & Kim (2008).

Image. For both male and female participants, identity emerged as an important final theme regarding their body appearance. Gender and developmental differences were found in the expressions of this theme.

Constructing and portraying a suitable 'feminine' image was identified as important to many of the girls, particularly the older girls in this study. Like earlier studies and theorists, this finding places femininity at the core of beauty for many women (Banner, 1983; Brumberg, 1997; Mazur, 1986). For the girls in this study a feminine appearance and identity could be obtained and reflected through elements within one's control, such as clothing, or outside their control, for example, body shape. The correct feminine image also included elements of morality. Most importantly, the desired image should read 'not slut'.

Mikki (10 years) was the only participant to explicitly resist being identified as feminine or girly. She used her clothing to attempt to present an alternative 'beach lover' identity.

The image most strongly endorsed and valued by the older boys in study 2 was that of 'risk taker'. The risk taker had several consistent qualities. The quintessential risk taker in this study was a boy who engaged in non-mainstream, non-competitive, physical activity such as bike riding. He performed dangerous and skilful tricks and stunts to an audience of friends. He risked and sustained many injuries but continued to perform regardless. The person was simultaneously admired and thought 'crazy' by other young males. Descriptions of this image show compliance with many dominant discourses about youthful masculinity. Strength, speed, risk taking, danger, high levels of physicality and skill, man as a machine, endurance of pain and pride in scarring are common elements of such discourses (e.g., Messner, 2002; Messner & Sabo, 1994; Trujillo, 1991, 2001). Participation in football is often the most obvious route to achieving such an image/identity in the Australian context (Bryson, 1994). However, in this study, on and off road BMX riding was used to achieve the identity by the majority of the older boys. This type of bike riding celebrates the individual creativity, co-ordination, non-violence and non-competitiveness that is more often found in sporting subcultures such as skateboarding (Beal, 2001; Philips et al., 2004). These were all qualities valued by the boys in this study.

Looking 'healthy' or like a healthy person was identified as a final valuable identity for male and female participants. Several participants identified it as important to their appearance. For example, Lisa (15 years) indicated that personal

hygiene and skin health were important to her. While health and hygiene may have important functional purposes Lisa's responses suggested that 'looking' and 'smelling' clean and healthy were more important than other functions.

Lisa (15 years): Showering [is important to me] (laughing). So I'm presentable and not looking bad, smelling bad.

Interviewer: Why [is] keeping your legs smooth and your skin nice important to you?

Lisa (15 years): I just feel more healthy. [If I don't use it] my legs go dry and....just go yuck

Desiring a 'healthy' image was compatible with Lisa's part-time work in the hospitality industry but is also consistent with hegemonic ideals for women and men. The ideals dictate not only the need for thin, toned bodies but also the need for clear, smooth, hairless skin (e.g., Boroughs & Thompson, 2002; Brumberg, 1997; Choi, 2000; Toerien & Wilkinson, 2003 etc.).

That image/identity was of importance to the appearance of many of the older participants is not surprising. Theories of development suggest that development of identity is of central importance to the older adolescent (Radzik et al., 2002).

Theme of Functionality

The functionality of bodies was also identified as of centrally important to most participants. Functionality refers to the various ways that the physical body can be used. The functional importance of the body within the context of physical activity dominated responses for boys of all ages in study 2. Within this theme, participants identified both organised and non-organised activities that were important to them

however as a separate sub-theme they also identified what they saw as the perceived benefits of participating on physical activity. This finding was expected as physical activity, particularly organised sport, has been long considered central in teaching and proving masculinity to boys (e.g., Connell, 1983; Messner, 2002; Whitson, 1990). Participation in physical activity is thought to teach boys the value of their bodies' functionality and performance over its physical appearance (Franzoi, 1995). Other themes identified and related to the importance of body functioning and uses the body included sub-themes related to health, including the impact of injuries, illness prevention and fitness. However, it also included more specific themes including physical skills, such as running, physical qualities, such as strength, body parts, and body shape. Personal protection also arose as a specific theme related to function which focused on the individual's desire for physical and emotional protection against teasing and bullying. Girls were also found to value the same aspects of functionality; however, the themes did not emerge as strongly or as consistently for them.

The gender differences that occurred were predominantly in the lower order themes where girls and boys had different emphases on specific aspects of physical activity. These frequently reflected different gendered discourses. For example, while boys and girls both identified physical activity important to them, the boys were more likely to cite football and bike riding as important, whereas girls described activities such as dancing or swimming.

'Play' emerged as an important area of gender differences. Study 2 revealed that unstructured, social, recreation based, physical play found in the younger participants of both genders, continued to feature strongly in the lives of the older boys. A physical activity equivalent of play was not evident for girls and may help to explain why girls are more likely than boys to drop out of physical activity with increasing age (e.g., Study 1, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003a, 2003b; Hickman et al., 2000; Riddoch et al., 2004; Roberts et al., 2004).

The inter-relationships between themes were complex with some themes having multiple components. Some themes, such as body size, were important to male participants due to their functionality, appearance qualities and contribution to identity. Within such complexity simultaneous conformity and resistance to popular discourses related to masculinity and femininity were evident. Performative gender can be used to explain how participants were able to negotiate their way through these apparently contradictory positions. Figure 11 provides a diagrammatic representation of the themes identified under aspects of importance about bodies related to functionality.

Developmentally, the younger participants were more likely than the older participants to give responses that reflected concrete functional abilities, particularly as they related to body parts. For example, several younger participants identified legs as being important parts of their bodies, enabling them to run, jump and walk.

Emerging cognitive abilities as well as changing developmental priorities is likely to account for many of the differences between younger and older participants in this area (Radzik et al., 2002). The findings in study 2 are in contrast to the study 1 findings which found few age group differences in self-objectification and socio-

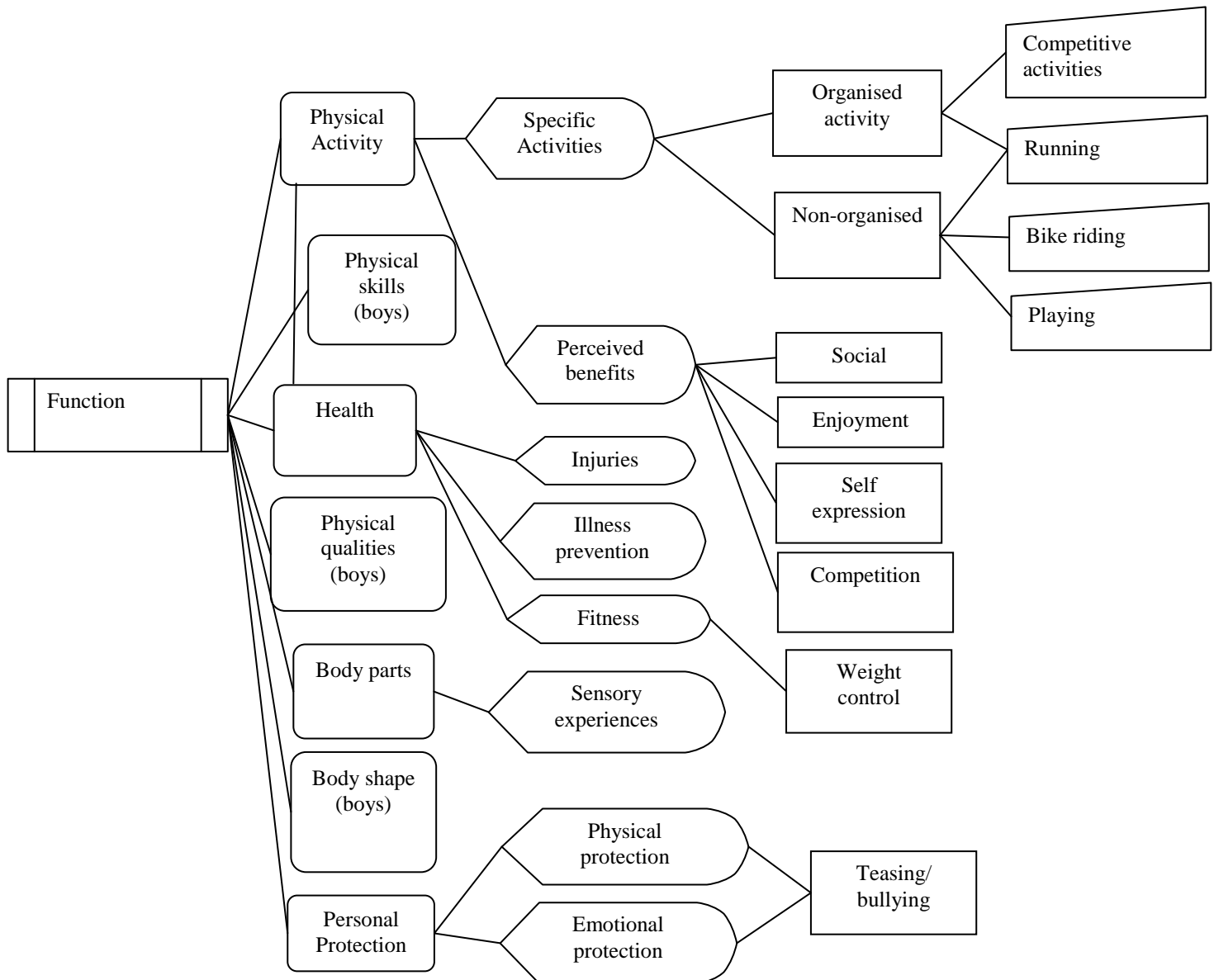


Figure 11. Themes attributed to the importance of function.

cultural attitudes to appearance. The developmental differences found in study 2 may be explained by ongoing developmental and socialisation influences.

Study 2 revealed that while 'how' participants' ways of expressing themselves may have changed with increasing age, many of the underlying beliefs remained relatively stable. Mikki's (10 years) experiences will be used to highlight this later in this section.

Physical Activity.

Most participants indicated that physical activity of was importance to them. Many boys and girls identified specific sports or activities that they particularly liked, while others identified playing and physical games in general as being important. Organised sports such as soccer, football (rugby league and union), tennis, swimming, archery, athletics including long distance running, discuss and shot put, were all identified by participants.

Most of the boys identified playing competitive and non-competitive football as important to them. Different aspects of the footballing experience were described as important. Kevin (8 years) enjoyed doing the "moves" and just 'playing' the game, while Luke (11 years) enjoyed the strength aspects of rugby union. Two of the boys enjoyed playing with mates, while Karl (17 years) felt that football afforded him the opportunity to be treated as "normal" and playing earned him respect for his large size and playing ability.

Over a decade ago, Bryson (1994) argued that football was the epitome of sporting masculinity within Australian culture. It remains highly exalted still. Likewise, soccer has been identified as "major signifier of successful masculinity" in the United Kingdom (Epstein, 1998, *p.7*). The findings of study 2 indicate that this remains true for the boys in this study.

Karl (17 years) provided an interesting individual perception of the value of football to him as a young man of Pacific Islander background, with a bigger than usual physical frame. Karl felt that while football provided him with several benefits, what he liked most was footballs' capacity to make him feel 'normal' and valued for his large physical size. Karl's engagement in this exalted form of physical activity arose primarily out of attempts to achieve normality, not from a desire to seek higher social status. He described using football as a way to seek refuge from dominant discourses of masculinity and race in his social world. Ironically he finds it in an organised sport that valorises the very qualities he is trying to avoid. Ultimately, success in this sport may legitimize these discourses and alter his relationship to them. Longitudinal research with large Pacific Islander men may offer further insight into this complex situation.

Karl (17 years): Everyone just treats me like normal at football. That's the only reason I play the game... Because in year eight I got sick of people being scared of me, and me mates said "come to football, no one will be scared of you". You just go out there and meet new people, like people my size, or bigger...

Interviewer: Was what he said true?

Karl (17 years): Yep...I've met some really good people in football.

To many participants of all ages, running was identified as important as a skill and sport in its own right. The ability to run fast appeared to be most highly valued. For example, speed was often given as the comparative benchmark for other forms of running.

Zetta (9 years): I'm really good at playing games, running and really high jumps.

Luke (11 years): I like to run

Interviewer: What kind of things would you do if you were stronger?

Luke (11 years): I could probably runner faster...

Karl (17 years): ...Bulk slows you down too much and I don't want to go slow, I'd rather go fast

The inability to run well was sometimes noted by participants. This also appears to indirectly indicate the particular value that running held for some participants. Katie (16 years) reflected on her own primary school experiences of running.

Katie (16 years): With my legs always being my base strength, it's always held me back in terms of running. I've never been able to run very far. I have pretty good endurance but when it comes to speed or agility, because my bottom half is so heavy, because it has a lot of muscle and it is fairly big, I can't run very well...

Interviewer: And is that important?...

Katie (16 years): It did sort of bother me when I was younger, in primary school, because you know that's when all the kids were running; doing

athletics and that was promoted as the right type of exercise. Whereas, as I have gotten older, I've found that being able to run and stuff isn't that important because I get exercise other ways.

Previous studies have also found that running fast is a valued skill, particularly for boys (Drummond, 2003). Katie's (16 years) responses raise an insight important to both girls and boy. As an older adolescent Katie consciously discovered that running was not the only kind of physical activity available and chose an alternative, dancing. Dance is one of the most popular recreational activities accessed by girls (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003a). Despite her personal resistance, it is easy to imagine how other young people may simply give up on physical activity if unsuccessful in the areas most highly valued.

This finding highlights the need for schools to be aware of the physical activities that they inadvertently value and promote and those that are marginalized or excluded. For example, most public and primary schools in Australia include compulsory attendance at yearly athletics and swimming carnivals where the fastest runners and swimmers are celebrated in front of the whole school. Few other whole-of-school events are held, inadvertently extolling these physical activities above all others, including dancing, despite its popularity with many Australian girls (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003a). While some students may be able to resist and find alternative forms of physical activity as Katie did, others may not and may simply drop out of physical activity altogether, especially if combined with other problematic experiences and beliefs.

Non-organised sports and games such as school yard football, cricket, handball, swimming, body boarding, gym work and playing games were more frequently identified than organised sports and were more extensively discussed as important to the female and male participants in this study. It was in discussions about these non-organised sports and games that important gender and developmental differences emerged.

Many younger participants, both boys and girls, identified the importance of 'playing' and 'games' to their lives. Playing and games included participation in non-organised versions of some sports, such as soccer, but also just general playing such as running around and climbing trees with friends and school mates.

Zetta (9 years): I'm really good at playing games, running and really high jumps.

The three oldest boys indicated the importance to them of non-organised bike riding. Two of the three enjoyed doing off-road jumps, tricks and street riding, while the other concentrated on long distance road work. None were involved in clubs or competitive bike riding but did it informally with 'mates'.

The oldest female in the study highlighted the importance of dance to her life. While she did classes, this was not geared towards the delivery of public performance or towards competition. Rather it was for her own enjoyment and to improve her individual skills.

Study 2 showed that 'playing' and 'games' was important for the younger participants of both genders. However, in the older age groups only one of the girls, Katie (16 years) continued participating in non-organised physical activity in a comparable way to three of the older boys in this study. For the older boys,

participation in bike riding may be seen as an extended period of 'play'. Bike riding was an important socialising activity that gave these boys the opportunity to practice and display physical skills in an unstructured and non-competitive environment.

While Katie's participation in dancing was also non-competitive and focused on fun and skill development, it was not social in the same way that the boys' activity was.

This gender and developmental difference is consistent with the earlier literature. For example, girls may be encouraged to be 'tom-boys' and engage in confident, active, physical behaviours until the end of late childhood or early adolescence after which continuation of such behaviour becomes socially unacceptable (Hargreaves, 1994). Furthermore, with increasing age young women are often focused on obtaining a more feminine-appropriate identity and while they may continue to 'play' together it often takes the form of shopping or doing drama together, as later suggested by Mikki (10 years) (Radzik et al., 2002). Despite these barriers, encouraging adolescent girls to continue to play and believe that being physically active is a legitimate activity, may be a promising site for future interventions.

Only three participants indicated that physical activity was not of importance to them - these were Lisa (15 years), Trea (13 years), and Damien (10 years). Trea felt that her character was the only thing important to her about her body. Trea's response suggests a personal resistance to dominant discourses about femininity and the importance of beauty. However, this resistance doesn't necessarily extend to the adoption of a more positive relationship with physical activity. Damien may also be viewed as resisting dominant discourses of masculinity in his view that sport was of little importance to him. In terms of physical activity levels the important difference between Trea and Damien was that Damien was adequately physically active while

Trea was not. Although Damien did not think physical activity was especially important to him, he did report enjoying and participating in various physical activities. This finding suggests that physical activity provides him with other benefits or experiences that are of value to him, while for Trea it does not.

Lisa (15 years), the only other participant to report that physical activity was not important to her, portrayed a position different to both Damien and Trea. She felt that sports were not really her 'thing' and actively avoided participating. She enacted this by deliberately leaving her sports gear at home on physical education days at school or by participating only minimally when forced to. She preferred to socialize with friends and hang out at shopping centres.

Lisa (15 years): You can have fun without sports...

Interviewer: So sport isn't particularly your thing?

Lisa (15 years): Yeah, not really.

Lisa's response is consistent with findings of earlier qualitative research with girls who never participated in physical activity (Cox et al., 2005). Similar to the girls in this previous study, Lisa reported feeling embarrassed and intimidated when participating in physical activity in the school setting and had preferred activities of a social nature. Cockburn and Clarke (2002) also found that rejection of PE in the school setting may bolster a girl's feminine identity through public displays of resistance to the masculine essence of sport. Given the importance of feminine identity to Lisa, it is possible that she benefited from public rejection of PE in these ways. Lisa's description of her decision not to participate in physical activity is consistent with Choi's (2000) assertion that sport conflicted with her preferred perceptions of femininity.

Perceived Benefits. A wide variety of reasons for participating in chosen sports and activities was given by participants. The most frequent responses reflected the fun and enjoyment experienced when participating.

Mikki (10 years): All the games that you get puffed out are fun.

James (14 years): It's a bit of fun n that, [a] bit of exercise...It's not something that you're going to set your whole life on doing. I only really like to go bike riding and long distant running and that because I enjoy it.

Other frequently reported benefits from participation in physical activity included enhancing physical fitness and socialising. Although both males and females described these elements as important to them, the boys were more likely than the girls to provide descriptions that blended pleasure, fitness and socialising together. As a result, physical activity provided many boys with physically active forms of recreation, consistent with their earlier descriptions of 'play'.

Kevin (8 years): You get fitter and stuff because ...it's running and stuff... I usually play at school with mates.

James (14 years): Staying nice and fit.... It's a good thing to do just with your mates and that.

Mikki, a 10 years year old female who played competitive tennis, was the only participant of either gender to directly state that she enjoyed the competitive nature of sport. This finding was somewhat unexpected. While individual girls may find the competitive nature of sport enjoyable, it was expected that more boys would identify

this as important, given the considerable social benefits that successful sporting participation may bring them (Chase & Dummer, 1992; Daniels & Leaper, 2006; Goldberg & Chandler, 1989;). However, none of the boys raised competition as an important aspect of their experience.

Mikki (10 years): It's competitive... You get trophies if you win....its just fun.
I like playing the hardest I can.

A further two girls, Zeta (9 years) and Gina (11 years) mentioned prizes or representational honours that could be won through successful participation in competitive sports.

Gina (11 years): You can run fast and represent...your school in the region and the state.

Gina and Zeta both said that they hadn't won any such prizes or accolades. Their comments suggest that these girls were acutely aware of the competitive nature of many sports and the value of winning. The statements also revealed the girls' awareness of their levels compared to the winning standards. While young people may persevere with activities without success at younger ages, with increasing age many may eventually stop if they feel that they cannot succeed. Alternatively, they may take up physically inactive roles as spectators or supporters.

Although winning wasn't important to him, James (14 years) identified competence in physical activities, including non-competitive activities, as important. James thought that physical activity should be enjoyable and that not being good at a certain activity should not deter one from finding an alternative that one enjoyed more and was better at. However, his ideas implied that continuing to do an activity that

you were not 'good at' was to be discouraged and could potentially make you look 'stupid'. Thus, for James, being good at physical activity did not equate to winning, but looking competent. Although only one individual's perspective, the opinion is consistent with research showing the value of physical competence to the lives of boys (e.g., Chase & Dummer, 1992; Goldberg & Chandler, 1989; Daniels & Leaper, 2006).

James (14 years): If you try and you're not really good at it, you...not really give up on it, but just accept it, "yeah I am not good at that sport. I'll go and try another one that I am good at".... Try something else until you find what you are good at...because not everyone is perfect at everything they do...I don't reckon people should give up...just stop trying to prove something to other people, that you are good at it... it's just pretty stupid sometimes.

Such attitudes, if shared by other boys, encourage resilience in physical activity despite experiences of failure. The absence of similar comments from girls may reflect the fact that girls are less likely to seek alternative physical activities especially when other non-physical activities more consistent with their gendered identity are more readily available.

Katie (16 years) was the only individual in study 2 who identified her physical activity, dancing, with providing her with an important mode of personal expression.

Katie (16 years): Movement can express emotion a lot more than anything else can for me. I know a lot of people say art is expression. Even though I do a lot of art, dance is very much more an expression of emotion for me.

Therefore, for Katie, physical activity served a number of important purposes. It was enjoyable, social, non-competitive, skill building and expressive. Few of the other female participants expressed such a variety of purposes to their participation in physical activity. It is possible that these multi-faceted purposes contributed to her being one of the few girls in the study who had participated long-term in physical activity. Similarly, many of the older boys expressed multi-faceted purposes in their participation in physical activity. While previous research has assessed participants' reasons for participation in physical activity, it has rarely examined the strength and relative importance of these purposes. Consistent with Harters' (1998) assertion that the importance of self-concept attributes must be considered when determining overall self-concept levels, it is possible that the quantity and relative importance of these purposes for physical activity may be predictive of actual participation levels. However, this requires extensive further investigation.

Although the older boys did not identify physical activity as a form of expression as directly as Katie did, their interviews reflected some elements of it. The older boys frequently talked about the importance of performing tricks and trying new things in their bike riding. However, this appeared to be more an expression of their character or identity than an expression of their emotion, although it is possible that it had multiple purposes.

Physical Skills. Individual physical skills were also identified by some participants as important to them. These included components of sports and games, but could also be seen as separate entities, especially for the younger participants. For example, Kevin (8 years) enjoyed 'doing moves' in football. Skills identified by other participants included doing bike tricks, jumping, climbing, landing, pushing and driving over (in rugby union).

Zetta (9 years): I like running. I like landing on my feet if you jump off a tree.

Luke (11 years): [I like] to push. Being able to push off the scrums and push in mauls and drive over and that

Karl (17 years): Bike riding would be doing the tricks. Just knowing that you've done something that someone else can't do.

It is difficult to conclude from these statements which aspects of these skills were important to participants. One possibility is that importance reflected skill acquisition or mastery although they may also represent pleasant sensory experiences. Alternatively, these skills may have served an image/identity purpose for some participants. It is most likely that the responses reflect multi-faceted purposes as previously discussed.

Physical Qualities. Particular physical qualities such as strength and endurance were also identified by some participants as being important to them. Luke (11 years) wished to be stronger to perform better at rugby union, while Trevor (16 years) highlighted the importance of endurance to him in his chosen sport of bike riding. Endurance was linked to James' desire to improve his fitness, build muscle and improve his asthma. James (14 years) spoke proudly of his endurance abilities.

James (14 years): I am pretty good at [long distance running]. We have this twelve minute run we had to do at school, the Coopers endurance tests, and I'm pretty good at it. I got a 15 years old excellent...It's like 3.4 Ks or something in twelve minutes. [I'm] pretty good with endurance.

Like physical skill, physical qualities were predominantly identified as important to the male participants, although individual girls like Katie (16 years) and Zetta (9 years) also identified some specific qualities important to them. Many of skills identified are those associated with both hegemonic masculinity and masculine sports such as strength and endurance. Their identification by boys in the study is not unexpected (e.g., Cahn, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994; Koivula, 2001; Wearing, 1996).

Body Shape. Body shape was also identified as important to several male participants regarding to the functioning of their bodies. Most male participants felt that changing their body shape would improve their performance in specific sports. Karl (17 years) sought muscle and weight gain to improve his performance in football, while Luke (11 years) wanted to be thinner but stronger for the same reason.

Karl (17 years): [I want to] bulk up a bit more for the position that I want to play

Interviewer: What part of your body do you want to bulk up?

Karl (17 years): Pretty much all...because at the moment I'm only 80 - 85 kilos. I went to the physio and doctor and they said for what I want to do, I'm supposed to be in the 95 – 100 kg range.

Interviewer: OK, so you need to put on about 20 kilos?

Karl (17 years): Yeah, of muscle.

James (14 years) also talked about the functional importance of not being overweight as it related to his body size. He felt that it would adversely affect his fitness, abilities and social life.

James (14 years): You won't be able to do stuff with your mates. You get puffed out too quick. You won't be able to do stuff to the best of your ability...

The gaining or losing of weight has important functional purposes for the sporting lives of each of these boys. This finding is consistent with theoretical positions and studies which argue that men are taught that the functioning of their bodies is more important than its appearance (e.g., Connell, 1995; Franzoi, 1995; Grogan & Richards, 2002). Female participants made few references to how body shape might contribute to physical activity aims of improving physical appearance.

Body Parts. Body parts were identified as functionally important to many of the younger participants. Both boys and girls, referred to the practical uses of the head, hair, eyes, ears, hands, legs, knees and feet. The responses are consistent with the participants' stage of cognitive development. Those in late childhood have yet to fully develop the ability to think abstractly and so remain focused on the literal uses of their bodies (Eccles, 1999; Radzik et al., 2002).

Health. Maintaining the good health of their bodies was identified as important to many of the participants, both girls and boys. However, gender differences occurred in how these health benefits were described. Younger and older boys showed complex interconnections between preventing illness, physical activity, fitness and improving performance.

Kevin (8 years): You need to be healthy for running races so you don't get tired half way. And you need to be healthy for footy because if you don't, you only play it a little bit then you get tired... You have to have a rest and drink.

Interviewer: How do you know when you are healthy?

Damien (10 years): You're not sick and you can run around without coughing and sneezing and that...

To James (14 years) health meant looking after his body, eating well and avoiding the use of drugs, alcohol and cigarettes.

James (14 years): Don't mistreat it...Ruining organs and stuff...Most people at school like smoking and... getting drunk on the weekends, ruining your liver...You wouldn't be too healthy at all. You'd always be tired and most of my mates smoke...You just wreck your body and wreck your life sort of thing...by eating stuff that's not good for your body because then you could end up getting diabetes or something like that.

James was the only participant to explicitly identify these health issues as important to him. It was expected that other participants would also raise these issues as there are many school based programs and media campaigns targeting health promotion areas such as smoking, physical activity and drug awareness (Northfield, Leger, Marshall, Sheehan, Maher & Carlisle, 2006 provide an overview). However, the failure of participants to identify health benefits is somewhat consistent with the earlier study of Sharpe et al., (2000) who found young people more likely to include product branding than health aspects in portrayals of community based physical activity (Sharpe et al., 2000).

The girls in study 2 did not explicitly mention any specific physiological health benefits important to them. This finding indicates that maintaining a healthy appearance was at least as important to them as other physiological benefits. It is also

is consistent with the proposition that, in modern society, girls are taught to value the appearance of their bodies, while boys are taught to value its functionality (Franzoi, 1995).

Several older male participants and one young female identified injury as important. Injuries constituted a unique theme that related to both the functional quality of health and character/identity, particularly for boys. Under the theme of function, injuries impacted on what participants could do with their bodies. For Trevor (16 years) injury and illness resulted in a loss of fitness and the inability to play contact sports. For Damien (10 years) and James (14 years), injuries should have prevented them from participating in physical activity but they did not. At the time of interview, Damien reported a long history of ankle injuries and was using crutches while awaiting an operation. Despite needing crutches, he was observed running/hopping around with peers before and after his interview. His guardian commented that he often did this even though it resulted in pain, the need for medication and a full day of sedentary recovery afterwards. Thus at 10 years, Damien is already physically embodying discourses on masculinity that encourage men to treat their bodies as machines, to ignore pain and injury and continue to participate injured, even though he did not directly articulate this (Messner, 2002). Young et al., (1994) suggest that men learn to ignore and expect pain and injury as a part of sporting participation. Hughes & Coakley (1991) suggest that such behaviours may be more likely when they have strong connections to an individual's identity. At 10 and 14 years of age Damien and James appear to be already embodying these discourses. These boys' lived experiences embody Messner and Sabo's (1994) assertion that "boys are taught that to endure pain is courageous, to survive pain is

manly (p.86). With strong connections with the desired identity as a risk taker, injuries appear to provide visible symbolic evidence of masculinity (Dubbert, 1979).

James (14 years) provided a great deal of detail about the various injuries he had acquired through bike riding and how he continued to participate regardless. He conveyed this information with an overt sense of pride.

James (14 years): I was riding along and my mate ran into me....I cracked my knuckle right down the middle. Broken right across here... I had to have it body strapped for six weeks.

James (14 years): [I] do this one track [I] don't really like jumping at because I done my shin really bad... plus I went across a jump and I cased it and my foot slid off the pedal ... big flap of skin just hanging there.

James (14 years): I usually come home with blood all on my pants and down my leg and stuff.

James (14 years): I have got a bodgy knee. I've got a swollen growth plate... It was really hard for me to walk... and so I put more pressure on it, just increasing the fluid more, and I stack it. It really hurts a lot...

Unlike Damien, James has integrated his embodied experience of injury into his identity as a risk taker. This will be discussed in greater detail shortly.

Reports of injuries from the participants in this study are consistent with research on injuries to children in these age groups. Research indicates that children aged 5 to 14 years consistently experience higher injury rates than other age groups.

Boys have more injuries than girls, and the number increases with age. The high rate of injury in young males in one study was partially accounted for by the large number of football-playing boys in the group (Belechri, Petridou, Kedikoglou, Tricopoulos, 2001). It is likely that activities such as off road bike riding, popular with many of the boys in this study, may also contribute to higher rates of injury.

Personal Protection. The ability to protect themselves physically and emotionally also emerged as an important functional theme for participants. Predominantly, the male participants articulated the need to be able to protect themselves physically or look like they could, although one of the older girls also identified this. The strategies that participants employed for protection showed both compliance with and resistance to dominant discourses involving masculinity and violence.

Karl's (17 years) lived experiences show embodied resistance to racial and gendered discourses about violence. Karl was frequently threatened with violence by other young men and felt it was important to deal with this. In most cases, despite his large frame and physical capabilities, he used his speed to avoid conflicts by leaving the situation.

Karl (17 years): You get the occasional people, like P-platers [probationary drivers] in cars that come flying by, throwing stuff at you. Then when you retaliate, they think that it is their job to come out and fight. Try to hit you and that.

Interviewer: Oh really? So there are times when you have to...

Karl (17 years): Yeah, do the bolt, the harry... [run away].

At other times Karl used his large frame to offer protection to smaller, weaker children. Karl described using his body size as a physical deterrent but stated that he rarely had to use it.

James (14 years) and Kevin (8 years) showed greater compliance with popular discourses about masculinity and violence. James felt that not looking like the 'weakest' person in the group offered preventative protection against threats from others. The 'weakest' person physically withdraws or avoids physical conflicts if they occur. Therefore, some involvement in fights was required to maintain your status as 'not the weakest'. A person identified as the 'weakest' one would be subjected to further physical or emotional, teasing or bullying.

James (14 years): [it's important to] not be the weakest person you hang around with... Usually they are the person that backs out of fights if something is about to happen...Or just tries to stay out of trouble if something like that's happening...Got this one kid, he's a little, shrimpy dude. Everyone picks on him because he is the weakest kid. Everyone will come up and pick him up and just muck around with him. He can't really do anything back.

Fears of victimization, aggression and violence are somewhat well founded as young men aged 15 years to 24 years are more likely to be victims of crime, particularly personal crimes including robbery, assault and sexual assault, than any other age group in Australia (Lawlink NSW, 2008). The capacity to defend themselves may serve a valid and functional purpose for many boys.

At eight years of age Kevin, who had no reported history of violence, was already identifying that his world may contain unspecified threats to his safety which he would need to defend himself against. This finding is consistent with popular

discourses aligning masculinity with violence. It is also in line with statistics that show that young men are the most frequent perpetrators of crime, including personal crime such as assault (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2009). It appears that the expectations and discourses about violence in the lives of young men may long precede any personal experience of such violence. Young girls did not make reference to these types of concerns.

Katie (16 years) was the only girl to identify protection in the physical sense as important to her. This position was based on a recent experience of physical threat. She emphasized the importance, not of attacking back, but of simply defending effectively. Thus, she accommodated a gendered position that resisted conventional femininity by refusing to be a passive victim, but fell short of being inappropriately masculine by rejecting excessive aggression.

Katie (16 years): Protection is important with me because a couple of months ago I was with a bunch of girls and one very scrawny guy and we were attacked by a bunch of guys. It was lucky that we weren't physically hurt. We were able to run away, but it was scary and just that whole fact that we felt really weak because we were all girls and we're all shorter than...In physical combat, [it's] not necessary to fight but [to] block your opponent and just protect yourself.

Gender differences were not apparent when it came to issues of emotional violence. Lisa (15 years) and James (14 years) both felt it important to protect themselves from emotional violence in the form of teasing from peers. Control of

their physical appearances was used in an attempt to prevent this. James avoided being teased by making sure he wasn't overweight while Lisa manipulated her clothing to avoid being labelled a "slut".

Lisa (15 years): At school I have to not look very... slutty because people in the higher groups can rip you off about your body and stuff like that.

Interviewer: How do you avoid looking slutty at school?

Lisa (15 years): You don't wear your skirt too high. Wear pants most of the time. Not having your button right down to here undone (points to chest).

Therefore, using the appearance of their bodies to avoid emotional or physical victimization was a unique category of experience for several girls and boys. Manipulating the body's presentation to avoid teasing inadvertently places responsibility for some of the teasing back on the possessor of the deviant body, rather than on the person doing the teasing. Victimization is avoided by further successful bodily manipulations. Compliance is rewarded with emotional and physical safety. These experiences are consistent with other societal discourses about weight whereby the obese individual is held solely responsible for their condition due to a lack of mental will power and laziness. The participants in this study show how this may be extended to other categories of experience. Teasing and bullying and its contribution to the lived experiences of young people and theories of self-objectification will be discussed at length in the next section.

Theme of Identity/Character

Identity emerged as a second order theme important to most participants. Some aspects of identity were organised along gendered and developmental lines, with many older boys valuing the identity of risk-taker, while many of the older girls

identified the importance of the feminine identity. The risk taker identity had a complex relationship with the functionality and appearance of boys' bodies, whereas for the girls, femininity was more closely aligned with physical appearance alone. Both 'risk taker' and 'feminine' showed strong conformity to societal discourses about masculinity and femininity. 'Healthy' was an identity important to both boys and girls. This was an identity strongly connected both to the functionality and appearance of the body. The emergence of identity as particularly important to the older participants is consistent with the developmental tasks of early and later adolescents (Radzik et al., 2002). These themes are best summarized in Figure 12.

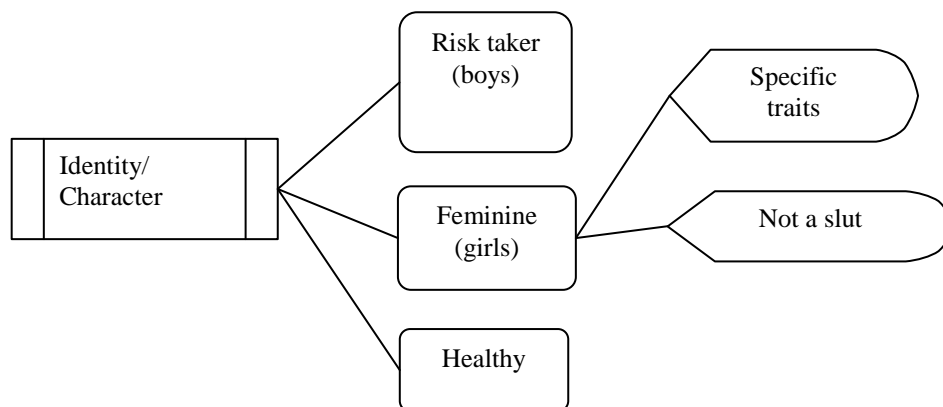


Figure 12. Themes attributed to the importance of identity/character.

Risktaker. Identity as a 'risk taker' emerged as a theme with strong links to physical appearance and functionality but was also independent of both for the older boys. The 'risk taker' was typically an older boy engaged in non-organised, non-mainstream, risky or extreme sports. The risk takers sustain injuries but continued to participate in physical activity. They 'wear' their injuries with a sense of pride. Like the boys in the study of Gard and Meyenn (2000), their pain becomes a currency for

success. Their actions and appearance speak of risk taking, bravery, specialized skill, speed, danger, fun and camaraderie. The risk takers receive disbelief, accolades and admiration from peers.

Interviewer: I guess when you can't walk you're probably not able to ride your bike either?

James (14 years): Still do it though, but it usually hurts a fair bit.

Interviewer: So you don't like to take a break, you don't give your body a rest or anything?

James (14 years): No I just keep going.

Karl (17 years): I just love wrecking [my body].

Interviewer: What do you mean by that?

Karl (17 years): When I go out with my mates they jump on trampolines, jump off them, do front flips and land on their backs and then they get up and walk away sore. I do it, get up and walk away and go, 'that was fun, didn't even hurt'. I haven't broken a bone yet. [I] kind of enjoy hurting myself and seeing how far I can take it.

Interviewer: What do your mates think about that?

Karl (17 years): They just think its stupid (laughs).

Interviewer: So what's the thrill with doing that kind of stuff? It sounds like you kind of do it even though you know you might get hurt.

Karl (17 years): ...It's just an adrenaline rush... Yeah, just the adrenaline rush and then watching people's reaction after you do it.

Interviewer: So what are their usual reactions?

Karl (17 years): Holy crap what's going on here! Give that kid a medal!

The 'risk taker' subscribes to popular discourses about masculinity as it pertains to playing injured, danger, taking risks, toughness, endurance and mateship (Messner & Sabo, 1994). Physical risk taking is considered a particularly valorised quality for adolescent males wishing to demonstrate their masculine identity and for establishing group status (e.g., Colburn, 1985; Young, White & McTeer, 1994; Smith, 1975). Pain becomes a currency for success (Gard & Meyenn). When girls are present, they are spectators, not fellow risk takers. However, there is some resistance to dominant gendered discourses. The risk taker opposes some dominant discourses associated with violence against others, winning, and competition by participating in a non-competitive, skill-based, supportive form of recreation. Any violence perpetrated is against themselves and their own bodies.

This behaviour is also somewhat consistent with the 'jackass' and other performances whereby young White males adopt a marginalized stance and perform humorous, dangerous, painful, self-denigrating and sometimes sexualized public acts and then openly celebrate their humiliations and injuries. These embodied performances are immensely complex and simultaneously paradoxical. They reinforce dominant masculine discourses about the heroic male, relationships to injury, aggression etc. (Brayton, 2007).

This is risky and dangerous behaviour for young males who are in an age group already identified as experiencing high rates of injury and victimisation. Shortened life span and debilitating injury has been associated with some athletes such as professional footballer players in the U.S.A. (Belechri et al., 2001; Messner & Sabo, 1994). For young males to adopt additional behaviours that may impact

negatively on their health and wellbeing is problematic. A longitudinal view of the development of such attitudes and performances would be useful in better understanding the contribution these performances make to gendered identity as well as injury rates in adolescent males.

Feminine. Feminine identity was most important to several of the older female participants. While it included some performance aspects, it was focused almost solely on physical appearance rather than functionality. Feminine identity could be achieved through having a curvaceous but thin body shape and the right balance of 'nice' looks, adornments and clothing. Feminine was sexual but not 'slutty'. The 'slut' would be marginalized by other girls and subject to teasing. It was implied that the slut was responsible for her own marginalization. This position is a dangerous one for young women to adopt and is not unrelated to blaming victims of sexual assault for their victimisation because of how they are dressed.

Unlike the risk taker, the feminine identity showed little resistance to dominant societal discourses associated with femininity. The exception was Katie (16 years) who insisted that femininity should contain some functional strength, particularly the capacity to protect herself if needed. However, this was an individually held position, not one articulated by the other girls in the study.

Personal qualities related to identity, but also consistent with hegemonic femininity, were identified as being important to only two participants. Trea (13 years) thought that the qualities of kindness, gentleness and being a good friend were the only and most important things to her about her body and central to her identity. Zetta (9 years) stated that connection to family and friends and the role of caring was important to her identity. Neither girl described these qualities as feminine per se, but each of these qualities is considered stereotypically feminine (e.g., Prentice &

Carranza, 2002). For Zetta (9 years) these values are also consistent with her identified Aboriginal background (NSW Department of Community Services, 2009).

Healthy. Almost all participants, male and female, wanted to be identified as 'healthy'.

Gina (11 years): Well, I would like to be healthy.

Interviewer: What's one of those that is important to you...?

Damien (10 years): Healthy, being healthy.

For the boys, this theme had strong associations with both physical appearance and functionality which has been discussed previously. For the girls, a 'healthy look' was most often associated with appearance or the healthy look which has been previously discussed. For both genders, thinness was mandatory to the concept of healthy. A 'healthy person' had achieved the right balance in body shape and size and they were not overweight, nor were they too skinny. A healthy person participated in physical activity and if he was a boy, he undertook the activity competently and could keep up with his mates.

Endorsement of 'healthy' as a desirable overall identity is consistent with the increased marketing and growing importance of the athletic body as a cultural icon for both men and women (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003). When 'healthy' is also marketed as 'athlete', the 'healthy body' has important symbolic value, whether it be male or female as it symbolizes willpower, independence, freedom, strength, heterosexual availability and attractiveness (Bordo, 1993; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003). With the pervasiveness of such images in the media, it is not surprising that 'healthy' is a desirable identity.

Theme of Physical Sensation

Physical sensations experienced during activity were identified by a small number of participants as important aspects of their bodies. Some participants were able to directly describe the feeling of such sensations while others implied its importance but had difficulties articulating the experience. For example, Mikki (10 years) described the sensation of swimming underwater as important to her, but when probed further, she returned to talking about swimming in a more quantifiable way such as how far she could swim.

Interviewer: What's important about that?

Mikki (10 years): Just doing strokes under water and stuff. When you think about it, it's pretty weird, swimming under water.

Interviewer: What do you like about swimming under water?

Mikki (10 years): I don't know, it just relaxes me I guess.

Interviewer: What do you like most about it like?

James (14 years): Just being able to ride around 'n stuff. When you jump everything goes quiet...Like nothing else matters until you either stack it or just do another one...It feels pretty good.

Katie (16 years): I like to feel myself physically rather than look at [my body dancing] as an image.

These three participants appear to describe positive physical sensations as important aspects of their bodies and all of the experiences occurred in the context of physical activity. Unlike many other important aspects, these experiences appear to be driven by internal experiences in interaction with the environment. They may be

similar to 'flow' experiences as described by Csikszentihalyi (1990). This finding is also consistent with the research of Greenleaf and McGreer (2006) who found that physically active women reported more frequent flow experiences than sedentary women. Although these kinds of sensation-based experiences were rarely identified as important and were difficult for participants to articulate, it may be important to consider them in the light of possible interventions. They provide participants with highly pleasurable physical experiences, free from the judgmental gaze of themselves and others. A more detailed examination of these experiences in young people may provide further information about the relative importance of these experiences in their engagement in physical activity.

Changes that Occur to Areas of Importance

Participants in this study were asked whether the things they identified as important to them about their bodies ever changed and how those aspects of importance changed. The majority of participants reported considerable changes occurred in the importance of different aspects of physical appearance according to physical and social context. Changes also occurred to the importance of functional elements of their bodies, to identity and sensation; however, these were identified by far fewer participants. The dominance of changes to physical appearance was expected for girls given the centrality of physical appearance to their lives (e.g., Bordo, 1990; Brumberg, 1997; Mazur, 1986). However, males in this study also reported a strong focus on changes to the importance of physical appearance, which is in keeping with those authors who suggest that men are being increasingly subjected to similar objectifying societal forces similar to women (e.g., Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Pope et al., 2001; Pope et al., 2000a; Rohlinger, 2002).

Changes to the importance of physical appearance dominated participants' responses. Many explained how changes impacted on their feelings about themselves. Social context (who they were with) and physical location (where they were) provided the strongest catalysts for changes but the two themes were strongly interconnected. The social contexts most frequently associated with changes to the importance of areas of physical appearance were being with (a) no one – being alone, (b) friends – people they regularly socialise with, (c) peers – same aged peers that they don't regularly socialise with, (d) members of the opposite sex, (e) potential romantic partners and (f) family.

The physical contexts most frequently associated with changes in the importance of physical appearance included locations such home, school, out socially, and work. These themes are summarized in Figure 13.

Social contexts such as being with friends and family, and physical contexts such as being at home, were generally associated with decreased importance in most aspects of bodily appearance and functioning and were accompanied by feelings of relaxation and comfort. Many participants reported that being around same aged peers not known to them or potential romantic partners, particularly in the school or external school setting, tended to increase the importance of physical appearance and subsequent feelings of discomfort and dissatisfaction. Actual and potential teasing or bullying had a particularly powerful impact on what was important to participants about their bodies, for all age groups and for both genders. The presence of same age

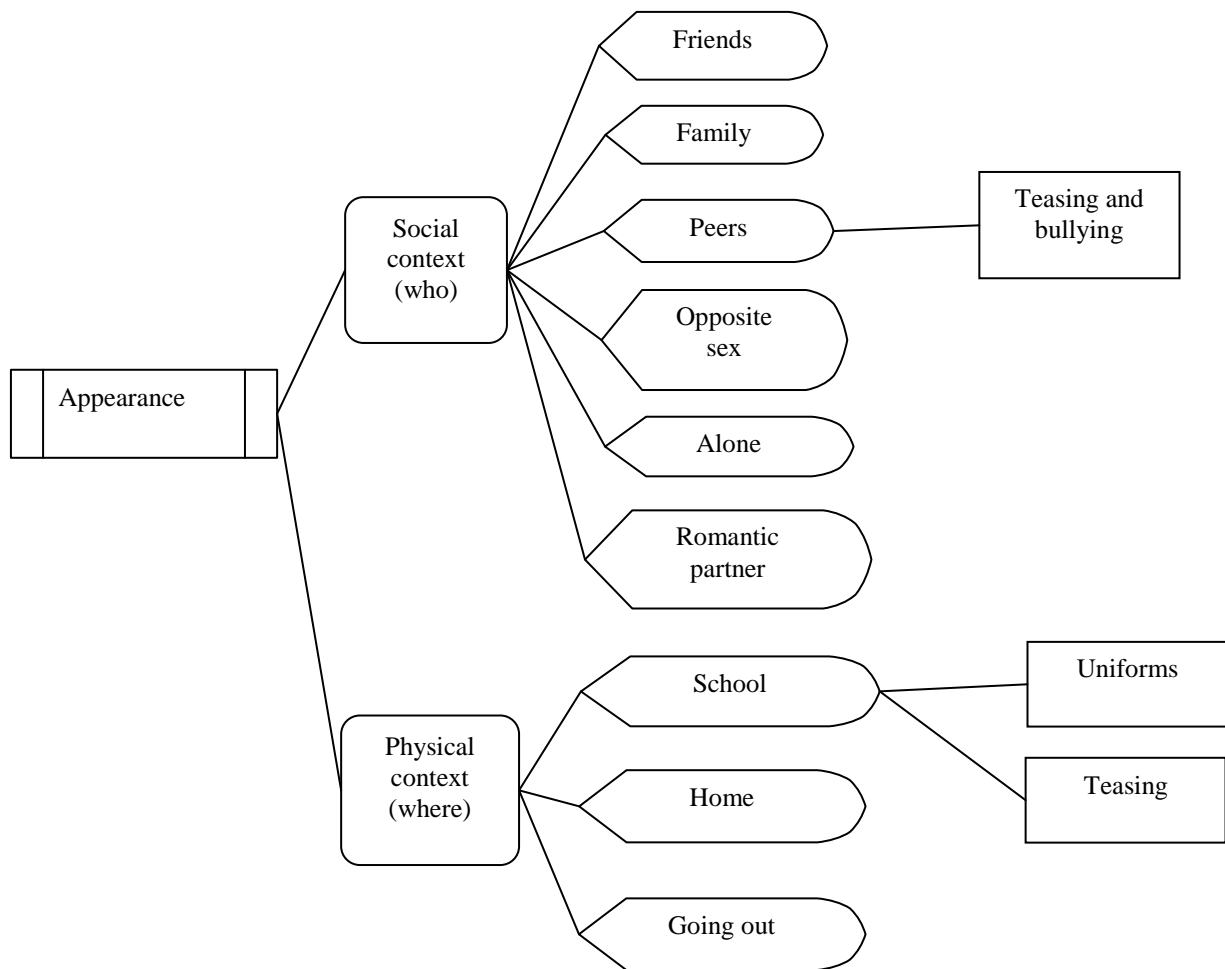


Figure 13. Themes reflecting changes in importance to physical appearance.

peers and the occurrence/potential for bullying was associated with frequent self monitoring and concerns about judgment from others, making it fertile ground for embodied experiences of self-objectification.

Some gender and developmental differences occurred in the data. The older girls identified unique experiences not found in the younger participants or in the older males. Unlike the other participants, these girls reported that being alone was not associated with decreased self-consciousness and reduced self monitoring of their bodies. Rather it resulted in the girls becoming increasingly self critical. They

subsequently reported feeling negatively about themselves in this context. This finding may represent an important lived difference of self-objectification as experienced by older girls versus younger participants and boys.

The oldest participants were articulate in describing many of the changes that occurred for them, however even the younger participants showed an awareness of these shifts. The younger ones appeared to execute less active agency in modifying their behaviour/presentations in response to these than their older peers. Previous qualitative studies have used the framework of performative gender to explore how individuals exert differing amounts of control over body performances and images that they attempt to portray to others (Russell, 2005). Theories of performative gender has been particularly useful in describing how women may move between different scripts of femininity in their lives (Usser, 1997). This framework was also useful in explaining young peoples' bodily experiences in different contexts.

Smaller numbers of participants, predominantly the younger participants of both genders, mentioned changes in functional importance depending on context. For example, Zetta (9 years) identified her hands as more important and more likely to get sore in the school setting due to handwriting lessons. Findings such as this probably best reflect cognitive differences in participants – with the younger participants more likely to give 'concrete' answers than the older participants (Eccles, 1999; Radzik et al., 2002).

Changes to what is Important about Bodies Related to Social Context

Friends. Participants, young and old, male and female, agreed that being around friends provided them with the opportunity to relax and dress casually. Dressing in this down-scale way appeared to be an unspoken and un-negotiated expectation among friends.

Damien (10 years): My friends don't try and dress up and look all good. They wear old raggy clothes that you might wear if you're painting or something.

Interviewer: So you don't talk about it, it just happens?

Damien (10 years): Yeah.

Lisa (15 years): [Around] your friends - just looking casual and not looking like you are going out on a date or something... Your friends are not going to rip you off about what you wear.

Many of the older boys also felt that their friends accepted them for how they were; however, unlike the girls, a certain amount of teasing was acceptable and viewed as fun. As a result, they described feeling that their appearance was not very important when around their friends, even if there were aspects of their bodies that they were uncomfortable or unhappy with in other contexts.

James (14 years): [Friends] have accepted me for who I am and they don't really care what you look like.

Karl (17 years): I just tend to forget [about my body hair]. With them it's just always a ball, having fun and that... Some of them don't have body hair and when I rip off my shirt they're like "oh watch out, Silverbacks out". They make a big joke of it, and we run around and that.

Some participants mentioned feeling more confident with their friends and that this influenced their feelings about their appearance as well as their behaviour.

Katie (16 years): Around friends, around people I am comfortable with, even if they do have smaller figures, I feel more confident in mine because I guess both them and I are used to it...

However, as a female, even around familiar people, Katie (16 years) still reported shifting feelings about her body depending on the body shape of her friends. Variability in feelings occurred even when she thought the other person was not judging her for her looks.

Katie (16 years): Girls with small shoulders make me feel very masculine... I have this one particular friend who has very small shoulders and she makes me feel really big just because I have big shoulders....

Interviewer: She doesn't say anything?

Katie (16 years): No, no, no! Just if I'm standing next [to her] I can tell that my shoulders are out here and she is standing in front of me and [her shoulders] are there...I am not particularly jealous of it or anything, it just makes me feel abnormal.

Katie (16 years) used the terms 'masculine' and 'abnormal' to draw contrast to her desired image of femininity and to describe the negative feelings she had. These terms are similar to those used by athletic women to describe feelings of 'otherness' about their bodies in social settings (Krane et al., 2004; Russell, 2002).

Similarities to friends were described as important to participants of different ages. However, the nature of similarities changed with age. Zetta (10 years), one of the youngest female participants, thought concrete similarities to friends important to her.

Zetta (9 years): I feel happy with my friends. I had a close friend Genevieve at [location] and we had the same type of hair, we could both fit our hands around our wrists and we are both the same size. We had the same sized feet and we had the same scars on the same spot.

Interviewer: Really! So was that important?

Zetta (9 years): Yeah it made me happy

While not mirroring their physical attributes, Katie (16 years) talked about consciously mirroring the body language of those around her whether they were friends or not. This mirroring is also described by Karl (17 years).

Katie (16 years): I have a friend and even though I know her very well, she slouches which makes me withdraw. But then other friends who stand up stand straight and I do the same.

In general, being around friends was identified by both the girls and boys in this study as something that minimized appearance demands and reduced anxieties about the body. However, the experiences of Zetta (10 years) and Katie (16 years) indicate that some monitoring of the self and others is still present for some girls even in this context. The experience of Zetta and Katie illustrate direct comparison with others and attempts to mirror the body presentations although neither associates this with negative feelings. For Zetta, it is at the concrete physical level, while for Katie it is at the level of behaviour, perhaps reflecting different developmental cognitive abilities.

However, mirroring the body language and facial movements of others is not uncommon. It is present in infants during the bonding and attachment process. In addition, popular psychology has found that individuals who like each other are more likely to subconsciously and consciously match the body language of the other. This behaviour is thought to have a biological basis in mirror neurons (see Fabbri-Destro & Rizzolatti, 2008 for a review). Zetta and Katie's behaviour therefore might partially reflect a key biological process that occurs in the context of connecting with others and which explicitly involves monitoring themselves and others. It may be a process exasperated in adolescence when young girls are saturated with socializing images and when identity formation and attracting a partner become central developmental tasks (Radzik et al., 2002). Research regarding mirror neurons is in its infancy and further studies in the context of adolescence and self-objectification are required.

Family. Being around family was identified as influencing what participants thought important to them about their body's physical appearances. Most young people thought that appearance was of little concern around family, unless they were going out. Many reported feeling indifferent, comfortable, relaxed and as wearing what they liked when at home with family members.

James (14 years): When you're at home with your family, [you] don't really care about what you look like

Katie (16 years): [My family] are people that I am comfortable around so I do feel more confident and not as conscious about the parts [of my body] that I would normally be conscious about. Just because they are my family and I

don't care...I go around in t-shirt and undies. I am not so much confident, but I just don't care around my family because I know they are not judging me or anything. They're not even looking...

Katie (16 years) indicates that while her feelings of confidence don't shift, how much she cares about this aspect of appearance decreases, impacting on her overall feelings and subsequent behaviour. James also hints at this. This finding is consistent with Harter (1982) and, later, Tiggemann and Lynch (2001) who both argue that the importance of particular qualities is a moderator in overall levels of satisfaction.

Katie (16 years) also offered the thought that being around her family was one of the few times when she was distracted from observing and judging herself.

Katie (16 years): I really don't give a toss when my family is around. I guess because I am concentrating on other things rather than my body.

Overall, being around family was an emotionally safe place for most participants.

Mikki (10 years): I know they won't tease me or anything. I feel a bit safer when I'm with them.

While teasing about appearance from siblings or parents was sometimes present, the boys mostly experienced this as fun. Karl (17 years) joined with his family by engaging in self-deprecating humour about a certain aspect of his appearance that was a substantial source of concern in other settings.

Karl (17 years): Hair-wise no. They don't really care. They just look at me like "oh". One thing I said to mum, she goes, "You're losing some weight Karl", and I said "yeah", and turned around and said "what I lack in muscle I make up for in hair". She cracked up laughing.

Trea (13) was the only participant who reported a different experience around her family. She had fights with her mother that left her feeling "fat" and thinking "what is the point in trying!" Trea said she fought with her mother a lot; however, she gave no indication that the fights were about her appearance. The fact that fighting with her mother, regardless of argument topic, resulted in negative feelings about her body, is consistent with the experiences of other participants being teased by peers. This finding will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, but perhaps highlights the centrality of physical appearance to participants' overall feelings of self-worth. It also suggests that negative feelings about other issues may come to be associated with physical appearance even when there is no logical connection. There is consistency in this finding with the findings of study 1 and earlier studies which have found strong associations between overall physical self-worth and physical attractiveness (e.g., Burnett, 1994; Fox, 1997; Raustorp et al., 2005).

Peers. Peers were identified as the people who most influenced how participants felt about the appearance of their bodies. Peers were other young people who participants did not know well and who were not classified as friends. Peers could be 'friends of friends' or young people in other, more popular groups at school. Peers were identified as the primary source of potential or actual teasing and impacted mostly negatively on participant's feelings about their bodies. Many participants altered their behaviour when around peers and interactions with peers almost always involved a complex balancing of participants' appearance and behaviour. Peers

embodied the 'external other' that participants felt scrutinized and judged by and for whose eyes they dressed and/or performed for. It was implied that peers did not know the true character or personality of the participants and were likely to judge purely on appearances. These experiences were described by the girls and boys in the study and were mentioned most frequently by participants in the two oldest age groups.

Interviewer: When you feel like a bit of an 'outcast' or [feel] people looking at you, is it around particular people or in particular places?

James (14 years): Sort of around anyone who is not your good friend. [I] sort of feel a bit weird around them. [They] don't know you for who for who you are and stuff like that.

Lisa (15 years): Make sure you look good. Make sure you aren't looking bad to [peers] and [so] they don't think you are not the best person, so they don't hang out with you anymore...

Interviewer: What would you do if you knew you were going to be in a setting with these people that you didn't know very well...?

Lisa (15 years): I would dress it up a little bit more than usual. Not too much, but make sure you look presentable and hide the bad features...Just like freckles and pimples and anything like that.

Karl (17 years): When you meet new people it is, "Oh I don't know if I should take my shirt off because everyone else is" or something like that. But after awhile, you probably get used to it. Or I just go to a local salon and get it [body hair] waxed off...

Karl (17 years): My mate just pointed this out. When I'm around new people, I tend to slouch a lot more...Try not to look really big...Couple of them noticed it so far.

These findings are also consistent with the findings of Jones (2001). He found that same sex peers rather than models were the most frequent targets for social comparisons about height, weight, personality, intelligence and popularity for adolescent girls and boys.

Embrey and Drummond (1997) also noted that some boys expressed increased concerns about their bodies when in contexts where their bodies may be displayed to peers and/or members of the opposite sex. This finding was particularly pertinent for boys who felt that they did not conform to societal ideals by being over or underweight.

The studies of athletic women have documented changes in feelings about their bodies in different contexts. The athletic women in these studies often raised concerns about body shape and how clothes fitted them when out socially, but expressed pride and lack of concern about their bodies when on the sporting field (George, 2005; Krane et al., 2004; Russell, 2002). Similarly, participants in the current study described feeling comfortable, 'OK' and even proud of their bodies in some settings such as on the sporting field, at home or with friends; however, around peers their feelings almost always changed to discomfort and ambivalence. Several male and female participants described specific behavioural manipulations they used to address these concerns. School provided participants with the strongest physical

context for these experiences with peers. Therefore, the educational necessity of attending schooling exposes young people to hundreds of peers each day, making it almost impossible for them to avoid these experiences on a daily basis.

Mirroring the bodies and behaviours of others was raised earlier as an issue important to participants in relation to friends; however, the older participants in this study also raised this as an issue in the context of meeting new people. Katie (16 years) was particularly articulate in describing the adjustments she made to her body and behaviour. Karl (17 years) was less articulate but made comments in a similar vein.

Katie (16 years): Meeting new people...I am less confident in the way my body looks. I wait to see how they react to my body and then I just [adjust] how I stand and how I act...

Interviewer: What kind of changes do you make?

Katie (16 years): If a person comes across confident to me and stands straight and is comfortable in their own body, I adjust to do that as well.

Interviewer: You kind of match them by the sense of it?

Katie (16 years): Yeah, if somebody is slouching even though they are still confident with their body, especially slender people or tall people, they sort of slouch...so I withdraw a bit and do the same as them, slouch back, so my big shoulders aren't obvious. It really depends on how the person acts around me. I will stand up more confidently with those people I am comfortable with and then if I am going to see people that I may not see that often, I will slouch a bit and withdraw a bit.

Karl (17 years): It depends on what type of people they are. Say outgoing, jumping around, well I'll go 'stuff it', and just rip my shirt off. But if they're quiet, I'm a bit, 'oh okay, better not do this, better not do that'.

Therefore, while 'mirroring' may occur at an unconscious level it is also occurring consciously. This embodied 'mirroring' requires constant monitoring of the self and of others. It demands constant adjustment as the individual tries to match the other and presumably the other tries to match them, all in an attempt to be perceived favourably. It is simple to see how such acts would distract individuals from other behavioural and cognitive tasks, in keeping with some of the known consequences of self-objectification (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Hebl et al., 2004; Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005).

Fears of teasing or bullying about appearance by peers were also evident in the interviews. These fears had connections with the physical context of schools. However, teasing could also occur when participants were out socialising in other locations. Jones (2001) and other authors have noted that the physical attributes idealized by adolescents are often the subject of teasing by peers (Taylor, Sharpe, Shisslak, Bryson, Estes, Gray et al., 1998; Thompson et al., 1999). Fears of bullying and teasing were evident for participants of all ages and both genders.

Trevor (16 years): They are my mates and so they don't really tease me about [my ribs/being skinny] but other people there do...Cause all my mates branch off into their mates as well...And when I go with my mates and their mates come ...My mates will be like "show em your ribs" and I show them my ribs and they are like, "cool, you're a stick"...and say stuff to me.

Lisa (15 years): At school it is different because I have to not look very, like 'slutty', because people in the higher groups can rip you off about your body and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Obviously you have got a uniform [at school]. How do you avoid looking 'slutty' at school?

Lisa (15 years): You don't wear your skirt too high, wear pants all/most of the time, not having your button right down to here undone (points to chest).

Interviewer: And what happens if people do [wear] that?

Lisa (15 years): They usually get labelled as a slut and get ripped off about it [by] the higher groups, the more popular groups.

For Lisa, even wearing a compulsory school uniform did not stop her from self monitoring her appearance. Violations of unspoken school norms about how uniforms should be might result in her being labelled 'sluts' by more popular peers. For young women, policing of their sexuality is a powerful socializing force. Cowie and Lee's (1983) found that girls could be labelled a slut if they "wear 'sexual' clothes, dress, act, or walk the wrong way, and hang around with too many boys, or with the wrong sort of boys or the wrong sorts of girls, or with someone else's boy" (p.20 cited in Carrington, 1989). Lees (1986) found that the label of slut was the most common insult applied to girls by both girls and boys and that the label is frequently used regardless of a girls' sexual activity (White, 2002).

Opposite Sex. Being around members of the opposite sex also resulted in changes to the importance of physical appearance and subsequent changes to participants' feelings about their bodies. For some younger participants, being around members of the opposite sex was also associated with teasing and/or bullying.

Interviewer: Are the same things, being sporty and your appearance, important when you are around boys?

Mikki (10 years): Probably appearance, weight again. Because there is a boy...I just don't want to get teased and bullied because last year I got bullied a lot by this boy, and he always spilled cordial and all this stuff on me and teased me on the bus.

Interviewer: What kind of things was he teasing you about?

Mikki (10 years): He was just saying you're stupid and I don't know... just trying to make me feel bad.

Interviewer: What is important about [your] weight when you are around boys?

Mikki (10 years): I think so I don't get teased.

Interviewer: Is that something that boys sometimes tease girls about?

Mikki (10 years): Yeah. And boys, they tease boys too.

Despite being in the healthy weight range, Mikki (10 years) was concerned about being teased because of her weight. She did not directly describe any changes she made to her behaviour to avoid this; however, it is perceivable that she may have.

For the older participants being around members of the opposite sex was like being around peers or other people they did not know, both in terms of shifting feelings about themselves and the adjustments they made to their appearance and behaviour. Several participants reported feeling more self conscious about their

bodies and its appearance in the presence of the opposite sex. Teasing from opposite sex peers wasn't always direct but was often interpreted as a result of the type of 'looks' or behaviour they saw in others.

James (14 years): My face again. [Others] sort of look at you a bit weird again...Acne!

Lisa (15 years): Probably the same as when you are with girls in other years. Try to impress a little bit more.

Karl (17 years): If they're outgoing, [I] don't really care... like if their 'yahooey', it doesn't really [matter], [but] if they're a bit quiet and a bit yahooey, I'll take my shirt off but leave my singlet on. Then if they sit really quiet, I'll do nothing, just be quiet and listen and maybe say a few words and that's it.

In these experiences, monitoring their own bodies and the bodies of others was central to the young people. Negative external evaluation was only presumed, but still resulted in differing degrees of behaviour and appearance modification. Further, earlier research shows that increased frequency of social comparison with peers or models is associated with significant increases in body dissatisfaction (Jones, 2001).

Romantic Partners. Participants were also asked what was important about their bodies when they were around someone who might be a potential girlfriend or boyfriend, a romantic partner. No participants indicated that they were not

heterosexual despite being given the opportunity to nominate same or opposite sex romantic interests. Most of the younger participants did not consider this question relevant to them.

Gender differences were evident in the older participants. Several older boys were adamant that they expected potential romantic partners to like them as they were and should not to expect them to change their appearance.

Trevor (16 years): If they like me, they wouldn't worry too much about my ribs. If they like me, they wouldn't pick on my ribs...because they are asking me out.

Karl (17 years): They should accept you for who you are. No matter what you look like or anything... If they say, 'go get waxed' or something, tell them to get stuffed and they're not the one for you.

In contrast, several older girls thought that they would make some changes to their appearance when around boys who might be potential boyfriends. In most cases this meant enhancing their best physical features and downplaying those they did not like.

Katie (16 years): It depends on their physiques too. Say if they were more slender than me, then I would probably sit like this, where they can't see the other half of my body. Also if I am like this and people can only see half of my body I am more confident because people aren't looking at the whole thing...So I can concentrate on being more confident with the other half of my body.

Lisa (15 years) also identified the importance of finding the correct balance between looking good, but not looking like you were trying too hard.

Therefore, the girls in this study were more likely than the boys to make changes to their physical appearance, particularly those features they did not like, in order to attract romantic partners. Conversely, boys expected acceptance of their physical appearance from romantic partners, regardless of faults, and indicated that they would rather leave the relationship than change. This finding is consistent with the persistent messages that girls receive through the media and advertising; that they need to constantly work at enhancing their physical appearance, something essential to femininity and attracting a partner (Bordo, 1993; Hargreaves, 1994). Messages about the importance of physical attractiveness targeting men may not yet be as strong or pervasive as those aimed at women, although there are indications that they are increasing (e.g., Rohlinger, 2002). This finding requires further examination.

Being Alone. Gender and developmental differences were found in participants' experiences of spending time alone. Many of the boys, younger and older, felt that being alone gave them time to relax. Being alone was a time when physical appearance wasn't a priority.

Damien (10 years): There is no need to dress up and that because I am all by myself.

Karl (17 years): Shirt comes off. I can walk around. I do my normal thing. I don't care if someone is walking across the front yard and I'm in my boxers walking around. I couldn't give a crap.

However, the two oldest girls, Lisa (15 years) and Katie (16 years), reported different experiences of being alone. Katie felt increasingly self conscious when alone. Lisa simply stated that looking good remained important even when alone. She suggested that this was a self imposed view while external standards were implied.

Katie (16 years): I'd probably be more self-conscious alone than I would be with my family because; I guess it's reflecting my own judgment of my body. It affects my mood, the clothes I am wearing and stuff. If I was looking good by myself then I would be happier even though I am by myself. But then if I didn't make an effort then I would feel less happy.

Lisa (15 years): Hygiene and skin. It just makes me feel better about myself. It makes me feel... looking nice. It makes me feel better again.

Even when no external gaze is present, 'looking good' is highly valued and impacts on these girls' feelings about themselves. Their own internalized beliefs about beauty and attractiveness become the imagined externalized other and seem to result in similar consequences. The boys in this study appear to experience such feelings only when in contexts, or in preparing for contexts that may contain an actual externalized gaze. The responses of the older girls are, therefore, consistent with the higher overall levels of self-objectification experienced by girls than boys. This result was found in study 1 and in previous research and possibly reflects an important embodied gender difference between boys and girls (e.g., McKinley & Hyde, 1996;

Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004). The findings are also consistent with the study of Quinn et al. (2006) who found that women were significantly more likely than men to continue to have body related thoughts ten minutes after leaving an objectifying experience.

The younger girls in study 2 did not articulate similar experiences despite study 1 failing to find any developmental differences between the age groups in measures of self-objectification. The lack of mention by younger girls may reflect differences in the samples used or may simply indicate cognitive or language differences between the younger and older girls. The younger girls may have similar embodied experiences to the older girls but not yet have the language or insight required to articulate it. Further clarification of this finding is needed through qualitative research.

The presence of various individuals or groups of individuals was found to have a profound impact on the embodied experiences of the participants in study 2. In particular, the presence of peers, members of the opposite sex and potential romantic partners were often found to negatively impact on what participants thought was important about their bodies, how they felt about their bodies and even how they behaved. This finding raises issues about the context in which the questionnaires in study 1 and other studies of physical self-concept are administered.

In study 1, questionnaires were administered in small groups made up of same sex peers of a similar age. While some participants appeared to be friends, others were not. The results of study 2 suggest that these settings may have an impact on the results obtained, either increasing or decreasing scores accordingly. Other, mass or large group administration of body related questionnaires in settings that include same or opposite sex peers may influence test results, inadvertently increasing self-

objectification and decreasing aspects of physical self-concept. Previous research with the SOQ supports the possibility of this confounding factor by demonstrating that self-objectification may be increased through mere exposure to objectifying texts, images or by asking participants to perform tasks wearing a swimming suit (Fredrickson et al., 1998; Hebl et al., 2004; Kittler, 2003; Roberts and Gettman, 2004). Therefore, the impact of the administration setting on participants' trait related scores of self-objectification and physical self-concept needs to be considered and investigated further.

Changes to what is Important about Bodies Related to Physical Context

School. The school setting was identified as a physical site impacting powerfully on the importance of appearance to most participants. Schools were sites that contained influential people including friends, peers, members of the opposite sex and potential romantic partners. The influence of these people has already been discussed and will not be re-examined.

For Katie (16 years), school raised another challenge to her physical appearance, that of uniforms. Although Katie's school uniform tended to have a negative impact on her feelings about herself, she had found ways of negotiating this.

Katie (16 years): The school uniform is something that affects me because they [are] the opposite of what I want to wear. You have to wear white at the top and it's unfitted and big and loose and makes your top half very big. And we wear black on the bottom which makes [the] bottom half slender. So it does the opposite of what I want to do. I guess I feel more self conscious at school because I am not wearing the type of clothes that I would like to be wearing and I also feel less comfortable in shoes....But when I adjust the school uniform, we have some other tops we can wear, like some black tops.

Then I sometimes wear fisherman pants which make the bottom half bigger and when I adjust it, I do feel more comfortable. ...So it's important to me what I choose to wear to school. [It] makes a big impact on how I act.

For Damien (10 years) school also impacted on the significance of clothing. Clothing was important to him on uniform-free days when he could wear what he chose. Damien said that he would make extra effort with his appearance on these special days. For example, he tried not to crease his clothing.

Damien (10 years): Like I might really, really want to look good because there might be something like out of uniform at school, and other days I just wake up and get into my uniform.

Previous studies have found uniforms to be a specific source of dissatisfaction, mostly for girls and particularly in regards to participation in physical activity and organised sports (Greenleaf, 2002; Krane et al., 2004). Damien did not express dissatisfaction related to uniforms. Rather his response showed that even some boys are conscious of 'looking good' when facing an audience of their school peers.

As raised in other sections, schools were identified as a primary context for teasing about appearance. This finding is not surprising given that schools are filled with peers perceived to be judging them according to their appearance.

James (14 years): When you are at school people sort of frown upon you if you look different or a bit weird...Like I've got a bit of bad acne, and at home don't really care but at school [I] get, "oh yeah get rid of this, do that". [I] get ripped off about it a little bit.

Home. Most participants felt that appearance demands were reduced when at home. Being at home was associated with being around family and many described wearing sleepwear such as pyjama's and boxers, without feeling self consciousness.

Going Out. 'Going out' was identified as a context that influenced what was important about physical appearance to a small number of participants. Those present in the 'going out' context was the factor that appeared to determine how the participants might choose to present themselves. For example, Lisa (15 years) reported that going out shopping with her family would result in more casual attire being worn, while going out to dinner might demand an appearance similar to being in a setting with unknown peers. Damien (10 years) also indicated that he would have a more careful selection of clothes when going out to dinner or to a birthday party. Again, the presence of peers, family members and members of the general public are implied in these settings.

Changes to the Importance of Functional Aspects of Bodies

Functional changes in terms of how young people changed in their uses of their bodies also differed according to context. Changes in functionality were identified less often than changes in appearance and were mostly identified by the younger female participants. Like the previous theme, changes in functionality were related to certain geographical locations or the presence of particular people. Such places and people included being around friends (Mikki (10 years)), being around potential romantic partners (Mikki (10 years) and Zetta (9 years)), being around people of the opposite sex (Katie (16 years) and Karl (17 years)), being alone (Zetta (9 years) and Kevin (8 years)) and at school (Zetta (9 years), Lisa, (15 years)).

Although not raised by many participants, several key gendered based issues requiring further consideration emerged. Changes to the importance of functional aspects of bodies are summarized in Figure 14.

Social Context

Friends. Although Mikki (10 years) enjoyed playing competitive tennis she did not think that she would automatically mention her sporting interests to her friends. Her manner suggested that it might not be entirely acceptable and she emphasised that she and her friends had interests other than sport. Thus, Mikki reported using her body in different ways when her friends were around .i.e., she would do drama rather than playing sport.

Mikki (10 years): I don't really mind if I am good at sports, it's alright to tell them, I guess.

Interviewer: What kind of things do you do with your friends?

Mikki (10 years): We do a bit of sports together but we mostly do plays and skits.

Romantic Partners. Although Mikki (10 years) did not think she'd necessarily tell her friends about her sporting interests, she did think she'd talk about sports with any potential boyfriends to see if they had shared interests.

Mikki's (10 years) responses indicate that although she enjoys and participates in competitive sports, she does not 'do sport' with her friends and has learned that many of her female friends may not be interested in sport or participating in it. This finding is consistent with the gender differences identified earlier in study 1, where boys consistently played in physically active ways with friends and girls did not.

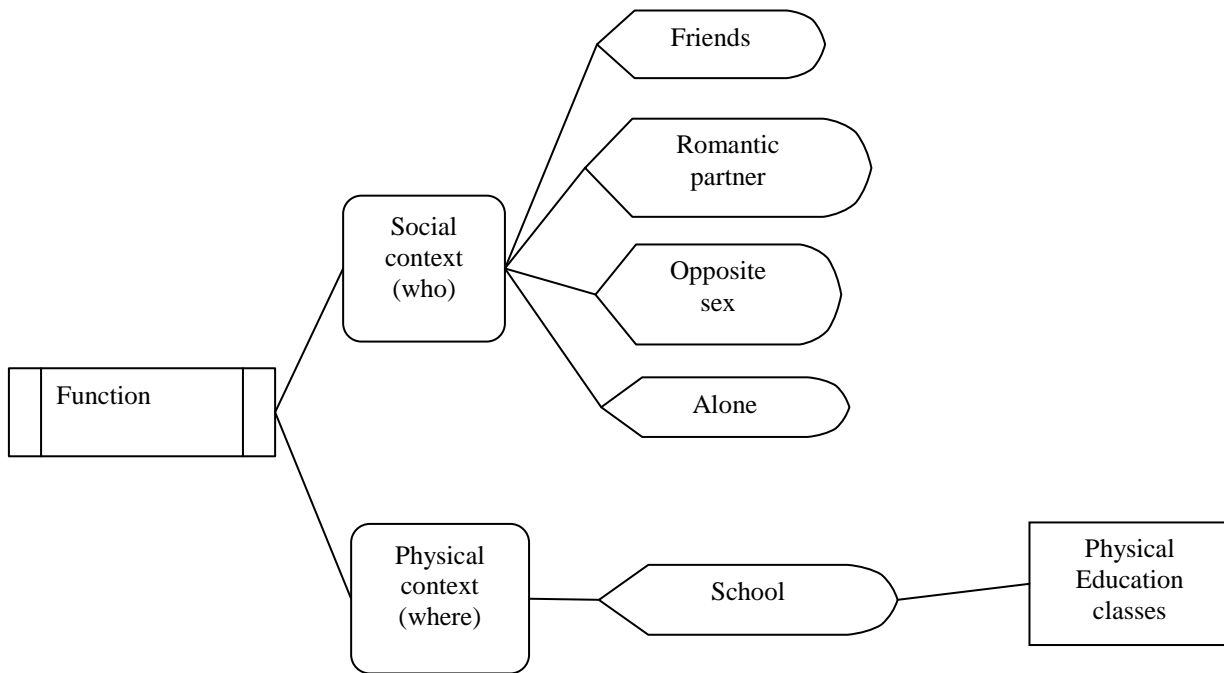


Figure 14. Themes reflecting changes in importance to the functionality of bodies.

Mikki's (10 years) experiences are somewhat consistent with those found amongst adult, athletic women. Cox and Thompson (2000), Krane et al., (2004), George (2005) and Russell (2002) found that elite sports women found themselves inhabiting two worlds, or adopting two identities which merged sometimes and are separate at others. Although Mikki does not express appearance concerns about her athletic body in social settings, she is expressing ambivalence about what is functionally 'acceptable' in these two parts of her life.

This finding is also consistent with theorists who have suggested that physical activity, particularly organised sport is incompatible with hegemonic femininity (Choi, 2000). Mikki displays simultaneous resistance and conformity to gendered discourses about sporting femininity by adopting and embodying alternative behavioural strategies. With friends, Mikki complies with dominant feminine

discourses by engages in activities such as skits and play. In the sporting setting, she resists feminine discourses by being highly physically competent. Within a performative gender framework, Mikki would be seen as moving between positions of 'being' or 'doing' girl when with friends and 'resisting' girl when in the sporting environment.

At ten years of age Mikki enjoys organised sport, thinks it is an important part of her body and is successful in competition. It remains unclear if this will be enough to sustain her continued participation. Longitudinal studies are needed to better understand the experiences of participants like Mikki.

Opposite Sex. Another gender based change in physical functioning was reported for Zetta (9 years) when she talked about the impact of participating in physical activities with boys at after school care. For Zetta this was a negative experience which involved physical pain and frustration.

Zetta (9 years): I just play with girls. I don't play with boys...The only time I play with boys is 'active after school'.

Interviewer: You're making a face there. What does that mean?

Zetta (9 years): Because I am always the one getting picked on in 'active after school'. I play soccer and when I kick the ball, I kick it to the wrong boy ...I just go in circles. I always miss the next run.

Interviewer: What do they do when you kick it to the wrong person?

Zetta (9 years): They kicked me in the arm.

Interviewer: The ball does?

Zetta (9 years): No, they kicked the ball at my arm.

Interviewer: Who does this?

Zetta (9 years): Well I missed this boy once, his name's Jay, and he kicked me on the hair. He pulled my hair and I turned around and I kicked him... and he went back at me and he kicked the ball at my face.

Interviewer: That doesn't sound very good!

Zetta (9 years): I had worse with a football.

Interviewer: Oh really! So it sounds like it's a bit different when you're with the boys?

Zetta (9 years): Yeah. They're mean and they're selfish. Girls they're nice...

Zetta's (9 years) experiences are consistent with concerns raised by girls in previous studies which found that games/sports are often too aggressive for the girls, are dominated by boys and can involve teasing of the girls (e.g., Evans, 1989; Leaman, 1984; Mahony, 1985; Vu et al., 2006). Aggressive contact with boys reduces Zetta's personal enjoyment of physical activity. Her experiences may also reflect the fact that many girls continue to struggle to find acceptance in sports which continue to be dominated by a male structure which accept and/or promote aggression and violence. While she is currently continuing to participate in physical activity, longitudinal studies are required to assess the impact of such influences on long-term participation. What is also concerning is that Zetta's experiences are occurring in the context of a national program designed to keep after-school care attendees physically active.

Katie (16 years) and Karl (17 years) talked at length about functional changes in their behaviours around members of the opposite sex. They described physical withdrawal or being more subdued according to their companions.

Katie (16 years): I am more withdrawn around males I don't know than females I don't know.

These behaviours appear to reflect two factors already discussed. The first is participants' desire to reduce visibility of themselves and their perceived physical shortcomings. While this is generally associated with women, this study demonstrated that young males, such as Karl, are also concerned about appearance when it is they considered to be 'unbalanced' or not 'normal'. Secondly, both Katie and Karl discuss attempts to match the physical presentation of others through slouching or physical activity as earlier described. Although these changes were only reported by two participants they may reflect issues of particular importance in later adolescence due to changing social, relationship and identity milestones (Radzik, et al., 2002). The issues are likely to impact on individuals' physical activity choices as such manipulations are difficult to achieve with bodies in motion.

Being Alone. Several of the younger participants expressed general dissatisfaction about being alone and with associated changes in functionality. For these participants, being alone meant doing fewer activities and having less company to keep them entertained. This was contrast to the self reflection on appearance described by Katie (16 years).

Kevin (8 years): When you are by yourself it's not good because you're always sit around and doing nothing. You don't know what to do.

Zetta (9 years): You feel lonely and you get really bored playing with yourself. So you sit there with a really bad frown on your face...You feel sad because you have no one else to talk to.

School. For some participant's school based physical education (PE) classes were found to be an arena for important gender based experiences. Lisa (15 years) described how PE classes impacted on how she used her body. Lisa deliberately left her PE uniform at home in order to avoid having to participate. When she did participate, she did so only minimally and attempted to have as little physical presence as possible. She explained that her lack of fitness and inability to keep up with others caused her embarrassment and drove this behaviour.

Lisa (15 years): [It's important to make] sure you're not being seen, really.

Interviewer: How do you do that? That must be hard?

Lisa (15 years): Stay in the corners. Don't jump in the middle too much. Off the radar.

PE classes require Lisa to perform physically skilled movements while wearing a uniform that reveals large amounts of her body. She must do this in front of the individuals found to cause her and other participants most concern about their bodies – peers and members of the opposite sex. The presence of these others makes PE classes a prime site for self-objectification.

Lisa's descriptions of participation in school physical education are similar to descriptions from the United Kingdom. Adolescent girls who described never participating in physical activity also felt that they needed to be already fit in order to participate (Cox et al., 2005). In another qualitative study, some girls were observed to be physically present in PE classes but were effectively disengaged by using strategies similar to Lisa's (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002). These authors argued that participation in physical activity could result in a 'femininity deficit' for some girls.

Visible disengagement from PE could be used to enhance femininity. Feminine identity is also important to Lisa so it is possible that her strategies of avoidance serve multiple purposes.

Changes in Importance Related to Identity

Only a few participants commented on how their identity might alter according to context. Furthermore, the changes in importance suggested appear to be fluid rather than more permanent or static changes, again hinting to links to performative gender. The main context for changes to identity was around potential romantic partners (James (14 years)) and peers (Mikki (10 years) and James). Like the older boys, James (14 years) said he would not change aspects of his character at the request of a girlfriend. He would prefer to end the relationship.

James (14 years): If you're gonna get a girlfriend, find one that accepts you for who you are [and that] doesn't want to change you into being someone else... Cause if they don't like you for who you are, - just get rid of em.

Mikki (10 years) and James (14 years) thought that they might alter aspects of their characters around peers. Mikki said she might say that she liked something that she did not in order to please a peer, while James (14 years) said that, around peers, he would do things he would otherwise consider stupid. He tried to avoid these types of situations but was not always successful.

James (14 years): One of my friend's other friends are kids that are always out on the weekends, just causing trouble...When you are out with them they're sort of pressuring you into doing stuff like that. You've got to prove that you are not a little whinger, a little girl...Sort of peer pressure n stuff... just doing really, really stupid stuff , not really smart stuff to do.

James' engagement in activities endorsed by peers seems to reinforce his masculinity by distancing him from femininity. Thus both James and Mikki (10 years) admit to the performative gender equivalent of 'doing' girl or boy in some circumstances. Although neither seems comfortable the performance, it serves to maintain their gendered identities.

The interview data suggests the participants in study 2 experienced some variability in what was important to them about their bodies depending on context. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have shown that self objectification has trait and state forms which fluctuate depending on contextual manipulations (e.g., Hebl et al., 2004).

Earlier studies by George (2005), Greenleaf (2002), Krane et al., (2004) and Russell (2002) identified the diverging feelings about their bodies that elite, athletic women may experience in sporting and social contexts. Study 2 suggests that variability is also present in the lived experiences of some children and adolescents across different settings. Several of the older participants, such as Karl (17 years) and Katie (16 years), were especially articulate in describing how they experienced their bodies as alternatively strong and empowering and as sources of shame and embarrassment.

This section highlights that peers, the contexts containing them and teasing exert the strongest influence over young peoples' feelings about their bodies' appearance, how they use their bodies and what they see as important about their identity. Even the youngest participants described self monitoring and made alterations to their appearance and behaviour in ways that maximized their acceptability to peers and minimized differences.

The powerful influence of peers is consistent with the developmental tasks of adolescence (Brown, 1990; Radzik, et al., 2002). However, the participants' descriptions are also consistent with Smolak et al. (2001) who proposed that teasing may constitute a unique type of self-objectification for girls. Qualitative evidence from study 2 suggests that peers of both sexes represent the 'externalized gaze' of others for this age group. Furthermore, study 2's findings suggest that teasing induces self-objectification for boys as well as girls. The impact of teasing on different aspects of participants experiences with their bodies will be discussed again later in this section, but more detailed research into this area of experience in the lives of young people is needed.

Feelings About their Bodies

In addition to the questions about what was important to participants about their bodies, participants were also asked to describe their feelings about their bodies. Responses could be categorized into positive feelings, negative feelings and neutral feelings. Overall, the boys reported more positive feelings about their bodies than the girls. This finding is consistent with previous research that has found body satisfaction and physical self-concept to be significantly higher in boys than girls (e.g., Welk et al., 2005; Welk & Eklund, 2004). Using a qualitative research design, study 2 found that boys and girls identified a similar range of negative or neutral feelings. Therefore, while boys and girls experienced a similar range of negative or neutral feelings about their bodies, the boys experienced a greater number of concurrent positive feelings. Study 2 also revealed that younger participants expressed more general satisfaction with their bodies than did the older participants. However, many participants' feelings about their bodies were complex and contradictory and there was considerable variability in emotion.

As expected, social and physical context exerted a strong influence on participants' feelings about their bodies (George, 2005; Greenleaf, 2002; Krane et al., 2004; Russell, 2002). The presence of peers and actual or potential teasing was identified as an important contributor to participants' negative feelings for girls and boys. Teasing appears to play an important role in encouraging young people of both genders to persistently self monitor and compare themselves with others. Other important social contexts that influenced participants' feelings about their bodies included being with friends, being with members of the opposite sex, being with family and being alone. Important physical contexts associated with changes in feelings about their bodies included home, school and sport. The range of themes identified is best illustrated in Figure 15.

Positive Feelings

To describe their positive feelings about their bodies, boys used words such as relaxed, happy, accepted, grateful, surprised, important, good-looking, and healthy. For Karl (17 years), feeling grateful was related to his large frame and his ability to defend himself and others against bullying from a young age. He was surprised by his ability to be as flexible as he was.

Karl (17 years): You see kids when they reach my age, they are still like fifty, sixty kilos and they get picked on a lot and are easy to throw around. I look back when I was little, I was a skinny little kid, but as soon as I hit Year 7 and I started beefing up and everyone started [saying] "Oh no, I won't pick on him. I'll go for his mates". But they wouldn't [go for my mates] because if I see a skinny kid getting picked on, unless it's joking...I go "What are you doing?"

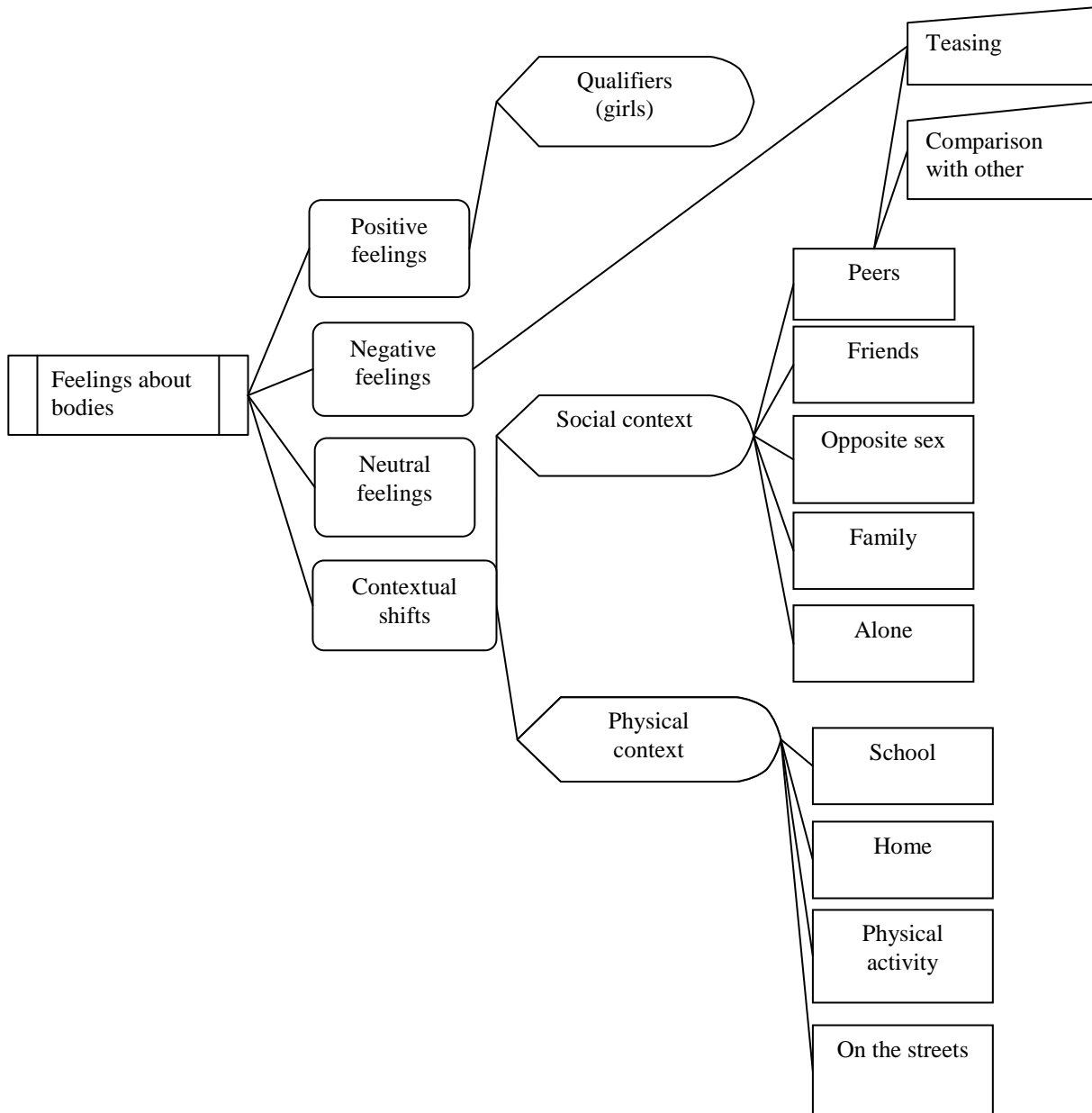


Figure 15. Themes reflecting participant's feelings about their bodies.

The girls in study 2 used words such as “fit”, “empowered”, “strong”, “happy”, “good”, “excited” and “comfortable” to describe positive feelings about their bodies. However, girls were more likely than boys to put qualifiers on the positive feelings they identified.

Gina (11 years): A little bit fit.

Katie (16 years): I wouldn't say like I love the lower half of my body but it's definitely the part I feel most comfortable about.

Negative and Neutral Feelings

Many girls identified a range of negative or neutral feelings about their bodies. These included feelings and descriptions such as "uncomfortable", "butch", "self conscious", "unattractive", "weak" and "normal".

Lisa (15 years): Self conscious... I just feel a little bit overweight. Not too much, but a little bit and I just [feel like] hiding it [my body], really.

Many of the negative feelings relayed by girls related to their appearance. Descriptions of feeling 'unattractive' or 'butch' challenged girls' physical attractiveness and gendered identity by aligning their identity with masculinity. Other negative feelings had a basis in function such as feeling 'weak'.

Boys also relayed a wide variety of negative feelings regarding their bodies. Such feelings included those of anger and frustration, sadness, shyness/discomfort, feeling sad and unwanted, skinny and bony (unattractive). While boys' descriptions challenged their attractiveness they did not challenge their gendered identity in the same way as girls. Boys expressed more concern about functional limitations. For example, Karl (17 years) cited anger and frustration in the context of injury as did Damien (10 years). Several boys expressed negative feelings about their physical

appearance. For example, Trevor (16 years) felt negatively about his body size. However, unlike the girls, none of the boys aligned their appearance with femininity to describe their negative feelings.

Karl felt shyness and discomfort when extended family members commented on his appearance.

Karl (17 years): Just taking off my shirt and being shy, all that. Someone's like "Check out Karl, Karl and Maria (sister) and I'm like "Oh no. I'm not really dressed in the best outfit. I'm not really up for coming out" and everyone's standing there saying "look how big he is for 16 years or 17 years"...Gawking - kind of thing.

Reports of negative feelings in study 2 participants are consistent with previous research that shows high levels of body dissatisfaction in boys and girls (e.g., Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Moore, 1990; Pine, 2001). The patterns of dissatisfaction differed for girls and boys in this study as well. Girls' dissatisfaction was more consistently related to appearance and challenged overall gendered identity. Dissatisfaction in boys related to both appearance and function but did not pose threats to gendered identity as it did for girls. This finding is somewhat consistent with earlier suggestions that, in Western culture, there are particularly strong ties between attractiveness, beauty and femininity for girls, a relationship not present for boys (Mazur, 1986).

Previous quantitative studies have consistently found higher levels of body dissatisfaction in girls than boys (e.g., Muth & Cash, 1997; Narring et al., 2004; Wardle & Marsland, 1990). Study 2 did not find that girls reported quantifiably more negative feelings about their bodies than boys, but that boys were more likely than

girls to identify positive feelings alongside their negative feelings. Many of the quantitative assessments used, including the PSPP-CY asked participants to select between essentially dichotomous items – ‘really’ or ‘sort of like me’ or ‘really’ or ‘sort of not like me’ - which may be insufficient to capture the entirety of the body satisfaction/dissatisfaction experience for many participants. When providing single response answers to item questions, participants were required to ignore co-existing or contradictory feelings and experiences. Qualitative studies are needed to explore these other important experiences.

Contextual Shifts in Feelings

Peers and Teasing. Consistent with earlier discussions about the influence of context this study found that participants' feelings about their bodies varied considerably with context. The people present and the possibility of teasing were particularly powerful influences for both girls and boys. Mikki (10 years), Gina (11 years), Lisa (15 years) and Trevor (16 years) all clearly articulated that teasing impacted negatively on their feelings about themselves.

Luke (11 years): [I feel] sad and it feels like you're not really wanted, like you're not needed.

Interviewer: What kind of things could happen to make you not feel so great about your body?

Luke (11 years): If I was being teased about being big, like fat.

Interviewer: What kind of things do they say [about your height]?

Gina (11 years): Well if I can't reach something, they say "don't worry, I'll get it" [or] "you're too small" or something.

Interviewer: How does it feel when they say that kind of stuff?

Gina (11 years): Bit heartbreaking.

Interviewer: What would be a time when you are the most self conscious do you think?

Lisa (15 years): At school with all the popularity and teasing and bullying and whatever.

Interviewer: Are there particular parts of your body that you are more self conscious about or is it more of an overall thing?

Lisa (15 years): Pretty much overall.

Trevor (16 years): It lowers my self-esteem...When someone picks on me about [my rib].

James (14 years) and Karl (17 years) described less direct forms of teasing as contributing to negative feelings about themselves. James thought his poor skin resulted in strange looks from others while Karl had overheard others commenting on his body hair. These experiences resulted in negative feelings and brought about behavioural changes.

James (14 years): I feel good about my body most of the time but when someone looks at you weird because I've got really bad acne and n' that you feel different about your body then.

Interviewer: How would you describe how you feel?

James (14 years): Sort of like an outcast, bit weird...

Karl (17 years): When I play football, I usually take my shirt off afterwards, because it's so hot. One game, I took my shirt off, and I heard a couple of people behind me go, "oh you should go get a shave instead of taking your shirt off. I'd be embarrassed". [I] really dropped my head and... I really felt bad about it. That's when it started, when I muck around, not [taking my shirt off].

Two of the female participants, Mikki (10 years) and Trea (13 years), indicated that teasing resulted in them feeling negatively about their bodies even when their body hadn't been the focus of the teasing.

Interviewer: What happens when people tease you?

Mikki (10 years): [Its] Scary. [I feel] I am not pretty, like I don't look nice...

Interviewer: So they might not be teasing you about how you look...and that changes your feelings about yourself?

Mikki (10 years): Yeah it's like I'm rubbish or something

This finding is consistent with the strong associations found between physical appearance, self-esteem and physical self-concept in study 1 and other earlier studies of self-concept (e.g., Boiven et al., 1992; Fox, 1997; Raustorp et al., 2005). The association between these aspects of self-concept may be so strong that challenges to one may automatically trigger concerns in the other, similar to classical conditioning. If this is correct, it is expected that it will be especially true for girls given the cultural importance of beauty and physical attractiveness.

Comparison with Others. Katie's (16 years) alterations in feelings occurred regardless of her relationship with and the gender of the other person. The crux of her discomfort and negative feelings lay in the other person having a more petite body shape in comparison to her.

Katie (16 years): I have a fairly weak upper torso and I'm broad... Sometimes I feel strong from that, then sometimes it feels a bit uncomfortable around other girls who have a very small torso like mine, a very small rib cage, because then I feel really big and really masculine. Also because I am short too I feel I am really butch when I'm around girls who are very slender. But then when I am around big people, it is more empowering to feel like I have more strength and physical capacity.

Katie doesn't just compare herself to an abstract ideal of what is attractive but actively compares herself with all other people she comes into contact with, even males, to determine who is more petite. The impact on subsequent feelings varies. If the other person is smaller than her, she feels dissatisfied and unfeminine. However, if the reference group contains bigger people she may feel strong and empowered.

Despite this girl's positive descriptions of her feelings around bigger people, previous research indicates that her responses are not universal. Research findings shows that, while up-ward comparisons with women deemed more attractive may result in decreased body satisfaction, down-ward comparisons with others deemed less attractive does not result in increases in the same construct (Lin & Kulik, 2002). Frequency of social comparison with peers or models in magazines is associated with decreased body satisfaction (Jones, 2001). Regardless of favourable or unfavourable comparisons with others, Katie is engaged in a process of constant comparison,

something likely to be distracting her from other cognitive tasks or minimising her chances of having 'flow' experiences; outcomes consistent with the negative effects of self-objectification (e.g., Greenleaf, 2005; Greenleaf & McGreer, 2006).

Trevor (16 years) was the only other participant in the study to suggest that comparison with others sometimes resulted in him feeling more positively about himself. The impact of up-ward and down-ward social comparisons among adolescent boys has yet to be studied. As a result it is unclear if this represents an important and consistent gender difference.

Trevor (16 years): It's good in a way cause all my mates at school are pretty ugly...there are heaps of ugly boys ...and then there's like a heap of good looking girls.

Katie (16 years) and Trevor (16 years) both articulate the impact that comparison with others has on their feelings. Self objectification theory purports that the focus on physical appearance results in negative consequences, regardless of whether or not the appraisal is positive (Fredrickson et al., 1998). It might be expected that appraisals which include a negative outcome may be particularly harmful but this requires further examination.

Friends, Opposite Sex, Family and Being Alone. As identified and discussed, each of these social contexts resulted in participants feeling differently about their bodies. The previous section contains comprehensive discussions of these findings.

Changes Participants Would Make to their Bodies

Participants in study 2 were also asked what changes they would make to their bodies if it were possible. Most participants, regardless of age or gender, each expressed a desire to change some aspect of their current body. The desired for changes to physical appearance dominated responses for boys and girls regardless of age. Participants nominated the desire for changes to body size, body shape, body parts and physical looks (see Figure 16). These third order themes were subsequently further divided into lower level themes. For example, changes to body size included the desire for increased height, increased muscularity, weight increases and weight decreases for boys and decreases for girls. Gender differences were evident in the data. The boys were more likely to want increases in weight and muscle and girls more likely to want less weight. These differences are consistent with previous literature. The appearance changes desired by girls and boys were often aimed at reinforcing and enhancing gendered identity in ways consistent with popular discourses about masculinity and femininity. Another striking gender difference was that several female participants identified changes to appearance possible only with invasive or damaging techniques such as surgery. None of the boys nominated changes of this type.

Changes to function or other purposes for bodies were mentioned less frequently. Changes to function related to desired changes to body size, body parts, physical activity including improving running, strength, and self expression, and health, including fitness and injury prevention (see Figure 16). Unexpectedly, few participants nominated improving fitness and health as a desired area of change. This finding was somewhat consistent with previous research that found young people to be more focused on other issues (Sharpe et al., 2000).

Appearance Based Changes

Body Size. The most commonly nominated desired appearance changes for males and females in study 2 were related to the modification of body size. Boys like Trevor (16 years) wanted to increase their body sizes through the addition of muscle and fat. Luke (11 years), on the other hand, wished to reduce body weight while retaining 'normal' muscularity.

The boys' desire to increase or decrease their body size is consistent with previous research (e.g., Cohane & Pope, 2001; Lowes & Tiggeman, 2003; Pope et al., 2000; Silberstein et al., 1988). The findings are dissimilar to previous studies in that boys felt that acquiring some fat was acceptable but only if it contributed to a favourable body shape (e.g., Grogan & Richards, 2002). This finding may reflect the growing importance of physical appearance to boys. It will be important to monitor the findings about the acceptability of body fat to boys to see if this represents a wider trend.

Several of the girls wanted to decrease their body size by reducing weight and increasing height. This shape is consistent with hegemonic ideals about body shape for females (Brumberg, 1997; Choi, 2000). Changes in body shape were also linked to increased femininity.

Lisa (15 years): Feminine, still have hips but have a skinnier stomach, legs, arms...

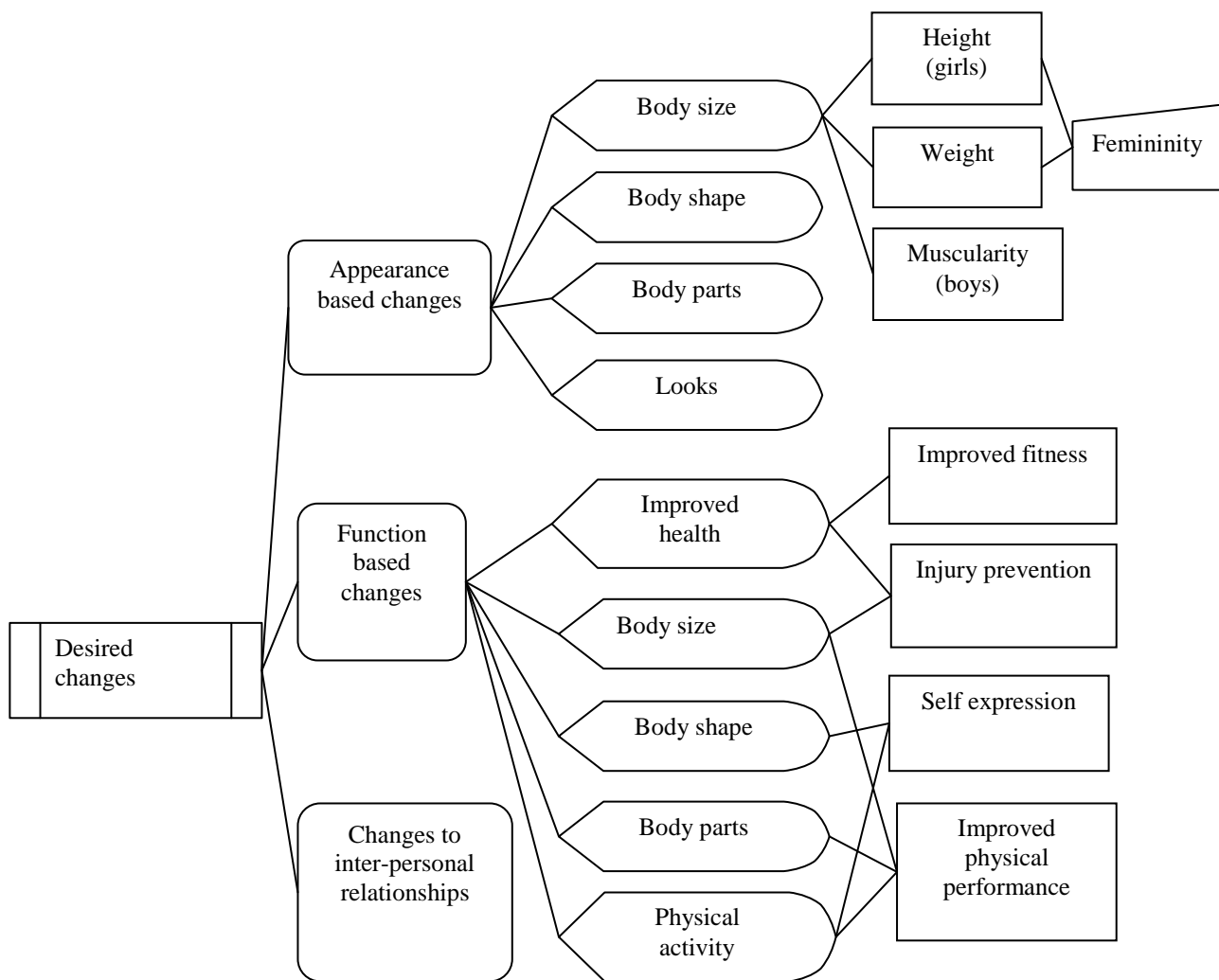


Figure 16. Themes reflecting desired changes of participants

Body Shape and Body Parts. Katie (16 years) wanted a different body shape which included less body fat. However, Katie also desired more structural changes including having more slender feet and wider hips, with the view to being able to wear different, more complementary clothing.

Katie (16 years): I would make my upper half smaller and my lower half bigger. ...I would have a small waist and have removal of the extra fat on my stomach. [I would] maybe make my hips wider just to accentuate that area, but it would be that silhouette that I would change to make more petite.

Katie (16 years): I would probably have more slender feet... sometimes we dance barefoot and... a lot of girls have slender feet and I have broader feet... I guess it's of a reflection of my body. But when I am around my family, all of my family have broader feet than me so I feel more petite in my family.

Mikki (10 years) also wished to change her feet, believing they were too broad and "weird", features she inherited from and shared with her mother. She was concerned that she would not be able to wear high heels when she was older.

It is not remarkable that Katie (16 years) and Mikki (10) wished to change their bodies, nor that the changes desired reflected dominant discourses related to femininity. Both girls desire structural changes to their bodies that are unobtainable without invasive procedures such as surgery or foot binding. It is possible that increased exposure to media featuring 'extreme makeovers' that include cosmetic surgery, may have altered adolescents' perceptions about what is possible in terms of obtaining the ideal body. This assertion is somewhat supported by research that shows increasing numbers of adolescents undergoing cosmetic surgery (American Society for Plastic Surgery, 2008).

Looks. James (14 years) also wanted to change his appearance. He wanted to improve his looks by getting rid of his acne. This finding is similar to those found by Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2006).

The girls and boys in this study were similar in that they expressed dissatisfaction with their bodies and wished for changes, particularly to their appearance, that ascribed to hegemonic gendered ideals. The nature of the appearances desired did differ according to gender. The boys predominantly desired weight gain, including increased musculature and increased levels of body fat, and

clearer skin. The boy's wishes may be achievable through behavioural strategies such as diet and exercise regimes. However, several of the girls desired changes unobtainable without surgery or other physically damaging practices. Therefore, while participants of both genders may experience the negative effects that come from focusing on external appearance over functionality, the unrealistic goals desired by some girls may lead to more extreme and unhealthy strategies to obtain these.

Functional Changes Desired

Improved Health. Several of the participants expressed a desire for body changes that enhanced its functioning in various ways. Despite this, James (14 years) was the only participant to express a specific desire for increased fitness and strength.

James (14 years): [I'd like to] get a little bit stronger... just overall, a bit fitter ...a bit more exercise sort of thing.

Body Size. Karl (17 years) thought that increased body size in the form of muscle and fat would improve his footballing performance by increasing his strength. He believed it would also help prevent future injury.

Karl (17 years): I'm trying to strengthen up [my] legs, my back mainly...They would lift or push a lot more...

Interviewer: What's the reasoning behind your back?

Karl (17 years): Mum has arthritis and my half brother has a curved back ...I get back pains now and then. Because I have a sore back I just want to build up because in football I get kneed in the back and that a lot too.

Gina (11 years) wished to increase her height so that she could reach things better. She also wanted longer legs and thought that this would improve her running ability.

Interviewer: What kind of things would you do if you were taller?

Gina (11 years): I reckon I would probably run a bit faster because I would have taller legs. I would be able to reach more things.

Body Parts. Damien (10 years) mentioned changes to body parts that he thought would improve his physical functioning. He wanted longer hands to be more like his friends but also so that he could grab things more easily.

Interviewer: If you could change something or some things about your body, what would you change?

Damien (10 years): Maybe my hands.

Interviewer: How would you change your hands?

Damien (10 years): I would make them longer. Because all of my friends have longer fingers than me.

Interviewer: So what do you think if you had longer fingers, what difference do you think that would make to your body?

Damien (10 years): If I need to do something and I could only fit my wrist into there (points to his hands), I would have more of a chance to, if I had to grab something, grab it.

Body Shape. Katie (16 years) thought that changes to body shape would allow her greater personal expression in her dancing. Therefore, her desire for a “feminine” body shape served both functional and appearance based purposes.

Health. It was notable that few participants nominated wanting to improve their health and/or fitness, suggesting that this is not a priority to many participants in these age groups, despite the many educational and community awareness campaigns targeting this. This finding is consistent with Sharpe et al., (2002) who found participants in their study more likely to identify product branding than health benefits to represent community physical activity.

The participants' responses also indicate that many of the desired changes to bodies have multiple purposes. Although physical appearance changes dominated for almost all participants, many had several other functions.

Changes to Interpersonal Relationships. Zetta (9 years) was the only participant to indicate that she would like changes to her body to reflect a better relationship with others. In particular, she would like her brother to treat her better as he physically hurts her at times. While this may reflect conformity with gendered notions of femininity, or Aboriginal values of respect for community and family, it may equally well reflect an idiosyncratic response for this participant.

Interviewer: Who would make you feel bad about your body?

Zetta (9 years): My brother? He hurts me. He slaps me, he punches me, he swears at me and he's only two.

Outcomes of Changes

Participants were also asked how their lives might change if their desired changes occurred. The anticipated life changes are summarised in Figure 17. The majority of participants who nominated changes felt that they would lead to positive improvements in their lives, although some were unclear exactly how it might occur. Improvements included more positive feelings about themselves, enhanced social

status and reductions in teasing. However, some of the older boys recognized that changes would not eliminate all negative experiences but may result in aggression and jealousy from others. This finding may reflect another broader gender difference found in the data. For many participants desired changes had multiple imagined outcomes.

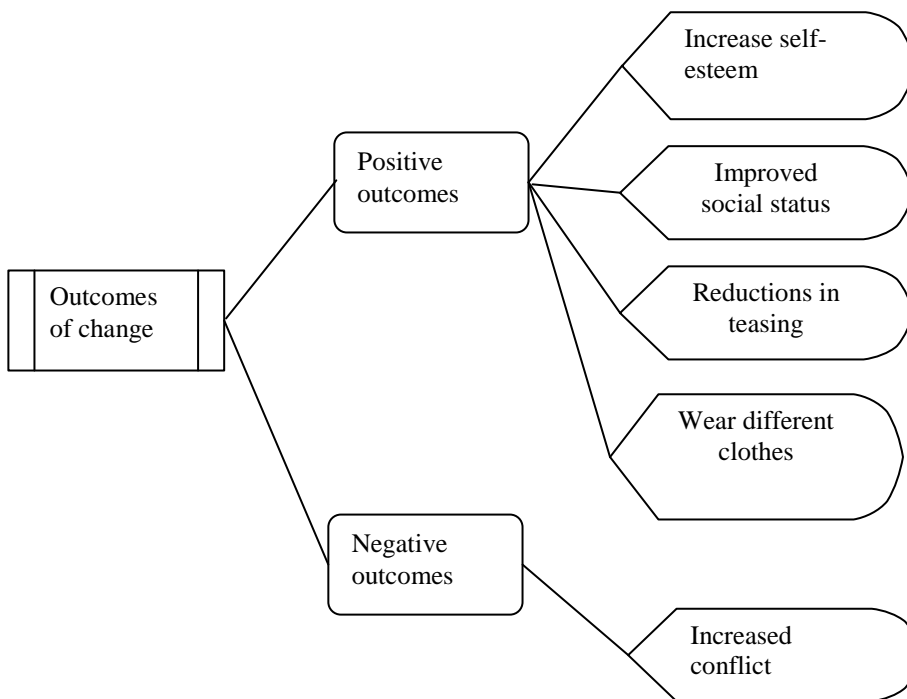


Figure 17. Themes reflecting the perceived outcomes of desired change

Positive Changes. Most participants thought that their lives would improve with change. Increased social status and/or popularity was one perceived benefit which was strongly related to reductions in teasing.

Interviewer: How would you feel if you were taller?

Gina (11 years): A lot better and I would have more friends...

Interviewer: Why?

Gina (11 years): Some people just reject all the small people and it is not very nice.

Lisa (15 years): I might not be friends with the people that I am friends with. People might like me more [if I was taller and skinnier]...maybe [I'd be] up in the popular groups.

Trevor (16 years): If I put more weight and muscle on I'd just be alright. I could probably just blend in. I don't think people would really bother me that much.

Increased self confidence and feeling comfortable with their bodies were benefits perceived by both the girls and boys. Others, like Mikki (10 years), thought their lives would simply be "better".

Mikki (10 years): When I am older, I would be able to wear nicer shoes and stuff.

Interviewer: Do you think your life would be different if you had thinner feet?

Mikki (10 years): Not different, just a bit better.

Lisa (15 years): It would make me feel better about myself, I know that.

Negative Outcomes. Boys were more likely than girls to recognise that there might be negative aspects to their nominated areas of change.

Trevor (16 years): No matter what, someone always finds something to pick on you about...Because then if I [changed] then there would probably be jealously...

Karl (17 years) thought the down side of increasing his weight and musculature might be other young males viewing him as a further target for aggression. Despite thinking that her popularity and social status might improve, Lisa (15 years) thought that this may not necessarily make her happy; however, she remained firm that the positives would outweigh the negatives.

Some participants, like Luke (11 years), felt that little would change if they changed in their desired ways. James (14 years) who wanted to get rid of his acne as well as improve his strength and fitness, did not think that these changes would result in many differences in the functioning of his body. He did think that it would help him to feel less frustrated with himself.

James (14 years): I wouldn't do anything differently, just still be myself. Do what I like doing.

Despite identifying several areas that she would like to change, Katie (16 years) also expressed some ambivalence about the necessity for change. She admitted feeling reconciled and comfortable with her current body.

Katie (16 years): I wouldn't really make big adjustments to my legs because I am comfortable in the way that I am down there and up in my shoulders. I used to be uncomfortable with that but now I have grown to be comfortable so

I don't think I'd change to a tall, slender, body where I could run and stuff...Because that's not who I am and I have learned to be comfortable with this me and but there are still changes I would make definitely.

Similarities between the responses of boys and girls related to the mixture of perceived outcomes of change and their faith in improvement in their lives. Gender differences also appeared in the data. The girls were more likely to identify positive outcomes, including improved social status and improvements in functioning, while boys were more likely to recognize some negative outcomes and greater ambivalence about the overall outcomes of change. This result is an important area for further examination, particularly when combined with the previous finding that several girls desired changes requiring more drastic techniques. Beliefs about the probable outcomes of change may play an important role in determining what behaviours are acceptable in seeking such goals.

Furthermore, the evidence from the weight loss literature suggests that participants may be erroneous in their belief that desired appearance changes will automatically lead to positive outcomes. For example, some weight loss participants do not experience improvements in body satisfaction even after losing large amounts of body weight. This suggests that it may be their way of thinking about their bodies that contributes to the dissatisfaction, not just the perceived body fault (Adami, Gandolfo, Campostano, Megeghelli, Ravera & Scopinaro, 1998; Cash, Counts, & Huffine, 1990; Wadden, Womble, Sarwer, Berkowitz, Clark & Foster, 2003). The application of these ideas to adolescents is largely untested and an important area for further research.

Teasing emerged as an important issue to participants of both genders and appeared to be a strong motivation for change. For many young people there may be some basis in reality for this desired outcome. For example, overweight children do face greater negative stereotyping than children who are not overweight (e.g., Greenleaf, et al., 2006; Hill & Silver, 1995; Levine, 1987). Thus, changing some aspects of their body appearance may result in improved treatment and social status.

Ideal Bodies for Girls

Overview

In the semi-structured interviews participants were asked to identify the ideal body for a girl of a similar age to them. Given that the media inundates young women and, increasing by young men with images of what is considered culturally attractive, it was expected that the girls and boys in the current study would focus on the importance of external appearances for girls. The expected specific focus was those presentations associated with hegemonic femininity, thinness, attractive face, limited muscularity etc. (Brumberg, 1997; Choi, 2000). After answering a general question about perceptions of the ideal girl body each participant was prompted with more specific questions related to other aspects of the ideal girl body; what it could do, and how it might feel to the owner. Responses fell mostly into themes related to these questions however; an additional category also emerged in the data. It related to personal qualities associated with the ideal girl.

As expected, physical appearance dominated both the male and female responses. This finding is consistent with the recognised centrality of physical attractiveness to the experiences of many Western women (e.g., Bordo, 1990; Brace-Gavan, 2002; Brumberg, 1997). In this study, specific body shape/parts, 'looks', femininity and achieving the right 'balance' were all described as important to the

ideal girl body. Descriptions of the ideal girl body in terms of body shapes/parts and looks often described what was ideal by highlighting what was not. It was frequently coupled with the difficult task of achieving the correct balance between various aspects of physical appearance. This finding is also consistent with the attributes ascribed to an 'attractive' adolescent girl as identified by girls and boys in an earlier U.S. study (Jones, 2001). Appearance related ideal attributes identified in the current study included looking 'skinnish', not too skinny, not bony, not too fat/obese, not too tall, not too short, feminine, olive or tanned skin, not too tanned, wearing make-up that looks natural, not wearing too much make-up, having muscles, not having obvious muscles, having long hair, a pretty face with nice eyes, curvy hips and waist, an hour glass figure, nice breasts, a nice butt, not having blemishes, smiling and looking normal.

The functionality of the ideal body was also identified by several participants and was dominated by the third order theme of physical activity. The functional qualities identified as present in the ideal girl body included being (a) somewhat physically active; (b) healthy; (c) fit; (d) flexible; (e) capable; (f) strong; (g) able to defend itself and (h) fast at swimming and running.

Participants articulated the general and specific physical activities they thought were desirable for the ideal girl body. Several lower order themes, such as 'health and fitness', were coupled with appearance based themes such as body shape/parts and femininity.

Although identified less often, several positive feelings were attributed to the possessor of the ideal girl's body. Desirable feelings were sometimes defined by what the ideal girl should not feel. Feelings associated with the ideal girl were dominated

by stereotypical feminine qualities such as feeling happy, caring, helping people and not being angry.

A further second order theme was also identified by a small number of participants. It related to the personal qualities defining the personality of the ideal girl. Perfection was one of the traits identified and a trait impossible for any girl to achieve.

Appearance Attributes of the Ideal Girl Body

Most participants identified several body parts and/or body shapes desirable for the ideal girl. Many participants from the two oldest groups (boys and girls) defined what was ideal about appearance by identifying its opposite, what was not ideal. Therefore, the ideal girl was identified by what physical qualities she should have and equally by what qualities she should not have too much or too little of.

The most commonly mentioned appearance ideal referred to weight and height.

Gina (11 years): Tall, skinny.

Interviewer: How tall would the best girl body be?

Gina (11 years): Probably just like... a meter and sixty or something.

The ideal girl body was repeatedly described as not too fat, too skinny, too tall or too muscley.

Karl (17 years): Not too muscley, not too chubby...

Lisa (15 years): Not way too tall. Not too short, not too big, not too small...

(laughter).

Weight was most frequently described as important for the ideal girl body by participants in the two older groups. The ideal weight was "skinnyish", but was also frequently described as not too skinny, not anorexic, not too overweight and not obese.

Gina (11 years): Skinny, but not anorexic.

Mikki (10 years): Skinnyish and tall.

Several of the older boys made specific reference to not liking girls who were excessively skinny particularly those who had visibly protruding bone structures such as ribs, shoulder blades and cheek bones.

James (14 years): Not being heaps obese. Just a nice girl, not one of them heaps skinny ones... You know how you see some of the models on TV and you can see their ribs and that...

Trevor (16 years): A really good body, not too skinny. I hate it when their ribs stick out.

For both boys and girls in this study, the ultra skinny look was undesirable as the ideal girl body. The ideal weight was less well defined but fitted somewhere between 'not too skinny' or 'too big'.

The concept of 'normal' or 'average' as it related to weight was also identified as desirable in the ideal girl's body by participants in the middle adolescent age group. It reflected the need for the ideal girl to find the correct balance between 'too little' and 'too much'.

Luke (11 years): Skinny, not too skinny. Just an average...

James (14 years): An average sort of girl, [who's a] good weight but not someone who thinks they need to be skinny.

Several girls made mention of an ideal height but none of the boys did.

However, the desired height varied and even references to 'tall' were not excessive. For example, one of the girls thought that an ideal tallness would be around 160 cm.

Only two of the older girls directly mentioned qualities attributed to femininity. They thought the ideal girl's body would look "feminine" or "girly". These ideals included the desire for curves in the "right places", such as the hips and waist.

Katie (16 years): It would be like an hourglass figure.

Lisa (15 years): Hips....some kind of figure. Not just straight up and down.

These participants also associated femininity with getting the right balance of body shape and particular looks, such as the use of makeup and adornments. Katie (16 years) thought that the ideal girl's body was feminine in appearance, but powerful and equal to that of a boy.

Katie (16 years): It would have to feel feminine and appealing and attractive but at the same time feel like you are powerful and that you can protect yourself...Some girls, if they are very petite, they would feel unequal to a male, like they are weak or something. The ideal body would have to feel equal but yet feel feminine and like a woman as well.

In this description Katie is seeking appearance attributes consistent with hegemonic

femininity but some of the performance qualities associated with hegemonic masculinity, such as strength and the ability to defend yourself. In this sense, Katie (16 years) wants it all. This outcome is likely to be difficult to achieve given the impact of functional attributes on physical appearance. For example, to achieve strength, some musculature is required. However, gendered performance may help Katie achieve this without sacrificing either ideal. Gendered performance allows Katie to 'do girl' when seeking a feminine appearance but 'resist girl' when desiring certain functional abilities, something that can occur simultaneously (Usser, 1997).

Although few other participants made direct references to desiring femininity, many of the desired qualities were consistent with dominant gendered discourses related to femininity and thinness. Few participants provided any real challenges to these dominant gendered views.

Muscles were rarely mentioned by either gender as a body ideal for girls. One of the younger boys thought that girls should have muscles everywhere, but not as many muscles as boys. The oldest boy also thought it important that girls not have obvious muscles.

Karl (17 years): If they've got a six-pack, don't have a fully raring six-pack.

They just sit there with a tight shirt, and you can actually see that they've got a six-pack.

Although Karl's (17 years) response about visible muscles is in keeping with previously held beliefs about the limits of muscular development appropriate to women (Choi, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994), the lack of comment on muscles by most participants is somewhat contradictory to previous studies. Earlier literature has emphasized the need for girls to be toned but not excessively muscular (Choi, 2000).

It may be that this appearance ideal is in a state of transition or isn't applicable to this subgroup of young people.

The oldest girl and two of the boys in the oldest age group referred to the ideal girls' body as having nice breasts. Their opinions on the ideal size varied from two liking "normal" size breasts to one liking "bigger" breasts.

Katie (16 years): ...a lot of girls like the feel with a big chest but because I don't have a big chest and I've grown to be comfortable with that and that's sort of part of my masculinity. My ideal body would have a smaller chest...not flat but just a smaller chest that sort of fits in with it so it's not really accentuated on the breasts or anything, but sort of [on] the waist and hips...

Trevor (16 years): I don't like the ribs, probably bigger chest, I like bigger chest women. And yeah, nice butts of course.

One of the boys thought that having a "nice butt" was also ideal. These findings are also consistent with earlier studies that have identified such attributes as important (Klomsten et al., 2005).

'Looks' in general were identified as important to the ideal girl body by many of the participants; however, what constituted this varied considerably. For example, two participants mentioned that the ideal body would have tanned or olive skin; but not be too tanned.

Trevor (16 years): Tanned girls look pretty good. Not too dark. Cause I don't like, I just don't like that crisp, like real, real dark brown colour.

Several participants, mostly girls in the younger and middle age groups, identified facial qualities as important to the ideal girl body. Similar to Jones' (2001) research findings, participants in this study thought that faces should be 'pretty' with 'nice' eyes, and free from blemishes such as freckles and braces.

Zetta (9 years): They could be pretty.

Interviewer: What does a pretty girl look like?

Zetta (9 years): They could have nice eyes, nice hair and nice looking...

One young male participant thought that the ideal girl face would always be smiling and never angry.

Damien (10 years): Always have a smile on their face and never get angry and that.

A 'natural' look, without excessive makeup was also identified as ideal. The correct balance of makeup, displaying a 'natural' look and other adornments was important. These more general references to looks were strongly related to the need to obtain the right overall balance in physical appearance.

Interviewer: What does girly look like these days?

Lisa (15 years): Usually makeup. Long hair, done up a little bit.

Interviewer: What's the right amount of a little bit?

Lisa (15 years): Not looking too overdone, looking like you slapped a little bit on just for the sake of it.

Overall, participants' descriptions of the ideal girl were consistent with the previous findings of Jones (2001). However, study 2 highlights the complex task facing anyone striving to achieve these ideals. Like Kirk and Tinning's (1994) assertion that "all of the standards of acceptable physicality for girls and boys are matters of degree", girls seeking the ideal body must find the correct balance between too much and too little of particular appearance attributes (*p.618*). With no clearly definable boundaries, e.g., skinnyish but not too skinny, not anorexic but not too fat, not obese", achieving the correct balance is likely to be a difficult and time consuming task. This task would require constant body vigilance and references to the bodies of others to ensure that normality was achieved and that the arbitrary lines between too little and too much had not been crossed. The lived experiences of balancing indefinable ideals create a perfect environment for rigorous self-objectification. This study would suggest that the language of 'too much', 'too little', 'normal' and 'balance', in fact, reflects young people's lived experiences of self-objectification, whereby they need to engage in constant self and other surveillance to see if they meet internalized and externalized norms of appearance.

Functional Qualities of the Ideal Girl Body

In terms of functional abilities, several participants thought the ideal girl's body should do some physical activity. It was most often raised by boys as a general attribute, with few specific suggestions about what type or how much physical activity the ideal girl should do.

James (14 years): Be physically active instead of just not doing any activities.

Kevin (8 years): A girl who is 8 who has a good body would be able to flex and do exercises...

Specific suggestions about particular types of physical activity came from the younger and middle age group girls who suggested that the ideal girl body would be able to do things such as running, swimming, jumping and landing.

Gina (11 years): Run fast and swim good...

Zetta (9 years): They could be running, talking, walking, climbing, and landing on their feet from jumping.

Mikki (10 years) was the only person to identify a specific sporting activity for girls, citing that tall girls could perhaps play basketball. The physical activities nominated are in keeping with the developmental levels of the participants who suggested them. The younger participants generally suggested activities associated with 'play' as opposed to specific sports, much like the activities they cited were important to them.

One of the older male participants thought that the ideal girl body should simply be engaged in physical activity that she liked doing. He implied that liking physical activity would make her more attractive to him as a fellow participant.

James (14 years): I don't care which sport they enjoy, as long they enjoy doing sports because I really like sports.

At times, the importance of physical activity to the ideal girl body was linked strongly to appearance based qualities i.e., fitness and weight maintenance.

Trevor (16 years): Be pretty fit as well...It's good to keep in the right weight [range].

Lisa (15 years): Play sports and not have to be too self conscious and wear whatever they like.

This response was consistent with earlier responses which indicated that the term 'fit and healthy' was often used as a way of describing a desirable physical appearance, especially by the older girls.

However, some participants in the middle and older age groups also thought that physical activity should reflect a girls' need to stay fit and healthy.

Lisa (15 years): Anything really, anything to keep them fit

Luke (11 years): Anything that they wanted to do with their body. Just treated the same as boys.

Like earlier comments on muscles, one girl highlighted the need for the ideal girl body to stay away from physical activities that might result in the girl becoming 'too' muscular.

Interviewer: Any kind of sports or activity that they wouldn't do, you think?

Lisa (15 years): Not too muscley and bulky. Something like body building.

This finding is consistent with previous literature which found that toned muscles, up to a certain point, were acceptable and desirable for women. Beyond an arbitrary point muscles become unfeminine, deviant and masculine (Choi, 2000; Hargreaves, 1997). Body building was an example given by participants of muscles too well built. However, the exact limits of musculature are still not clear. Kane (17 years) indicated several times that for him any visible muscle was undesirable on a girl.

Karl (17 years): The fact that you're not even flexing, just sitting there, and you can just see all your muscles, and you can see your veins and that's just a big turn off to me.

Interviewer: ...so what should the best girl body look like?

Karl (17 years): Should have some strength in them, but just, again, not showing it off. Have a little bit of chubbiness over it.

It is encouraging that many participants in study 2 identified the ideal girl body as having a variety of important functional qualities, most frequently including an engagement in physical activity. This is an important finding given the current high rates of physical inactivity impacting on young people, especially young women (e.g., Booth et al., 1997; Roberts et al., 2004; Stephens et al., 2000).

Also under the theme of function, a number of participants nominated particular physical qualities that the ideal girl body should possess. Katie (16 years) thought that it should display strength, not in its capacity to move heavy objects, but as reflected in stance and the attitude. Strength in terms of the ability to defend against

attackers was important as well as the ability to feel “equal to a male”, but, at the same time, the ideal body should not feel unfeminine. Achieving this goal appeared to be a complex balancing act with both functional and appearance aspects to it.

Katie (16 years): To have a lot of strength is important. To keep that femininity in the upper half but to have strength in [your] legs. That base power is very important to me...

Interviewer: How would strength be demonstrated in the ideal body?

Katie (16 years): It's very much in someone's stance. A strong model, even the way they would stand. They hold themselves up with ease and in the way they walk it would be...I don't know it's really hard to describe...

Another of the youngest male participants mentioned the importance of both strength and flexibility to the ideal girls' body; however, he did not provide a context for these abilities. The quality of flexibility falls into a stereotypical beliefs about women and women's movements – that it is natural for women to be flexible and graceful.

Kevin (8 years): She'll be able to do exercises, with her flexing, like going backwards and (puts both arms above his head and leans backwards in his chair)

Interviewer: Is that like a back stand sort of thing?

Kevin (8 years): Yeah and a front stand like that...and put your legs up in the air...and you curve forwards [and] do all these exercises and stuff

Also under the theme of function and appearance, Mikki (10 years) identified the ideal girl body as being able to engage in modelling. The ideal body, therefore, served a vocational function, albeit a vocation centred on physical appearance.

Perfectionism was identified as desirable for the ideal girl body both as a way of functioning and as a personality trait. It was suggested that girls with ideal bodies could do whatever they wanted to do with their bodies "perfectly".

Mikki (10 years): They are really perfect in everything and they do things so perfectly. [They could] do everything that you could do, just more...

Interviewer: So they would be able to do everything but do it better?

Mikki (10 years): Yeah and do more stuff.

This belief may highlight the unrealistically high standards that some girls aspire to. In this view, not only should the ideal girl look good but she should be flawless in the way she uses her body. Such high ideals make a favourable self comparison very unlikely, increasing the chances of experiencing dissatisfaction and other negative consequences. Such high expectations may also encourage some girls to use inappropriate means to achieve the unrealistic goals of perfection in appearance and performance highlighted in the earlier section. Other girls may simply give up on physical activity if they are unable to meet such unachievable expectations, thus, contributing to inadequate physical activity levels.

Feelings Associated with the Ideal Girl Body

Many participants, both boys and girls, thought that girls who had ideal bodies would view themselves positively. They thought that the ideal girl would feel “good”, satisfied with herself without a desire for further changes, comfortable, confident, and would not compare herself with others. They also thought that the possessor of the ideal girl's body would feel powerful, feminine, attractive, and appealing.

James (14 years): Sorta like the way they are.

Katie (16 years): To be strong within yourself. Not to necessarily compare it with anyone. To hold yourself, in whatever you do, whether it be running or dancing or whatever...

Luke (11 years): Really good (laughs).

Mikki (10 years): I would be really happy.

Participants nominated only positive feelings associated with the possessor of the ideal girl's body. Like other ideals of perfection, this is an unrealistic perception. Expected positive feelings included self confidence and the ability to avoid comparing one's self with others. The idea that a person with an ideal body would not compare themselves with others is particularly unrealistic given that most of the physical ideals identified require complex balancing, which has comparison with others as inherent.

This finding also shows that many participants were unaware of the concept of ‘normative discontent’ (Rodin, Silberstein, Striegel-Moore, 1985). They either did not recognize that many females with bodies considered societally ideal, such as models,

suffer from eating disorders and experience body dissatisfaction, or felt that this would not happen to them should they achieve this ideal. Either belief is unrealistic and potentially problematic.

Personal Qualities Associated with the Ideal Girl Body

Only two participants identified personal qualities possessed by girls with ideal bodies. This finding is in keeping with Brumberg's suggestion that physical appearance has replaced moral virtues to become the central defining feature of girls and women of the modern era (1997). Participants who identified the importance of personal qualities were in the youngest age group, suggesting that the younger people in this study may value personal qualities, while simultaneously endorsing the importance of physical qualities to the ideal girl's body.

Damien (10 years) felt that girls with ideal bodies should engage in acts of helping others.

Damien (10 years): She could help people the same as boys... [They should be happy. Always encouraging people to do good things. Never do bad things. Help people when they need it, when they're down, when they're sad].

Although Damien (10 years) thought that boys and girls should possess many of the same personal qualities, he also thought that girls should display less anger than boys.

Damien (10 years): Always have a smile on their face and never get angry ... they don't react as quickly as boys.

These beliefs conform to stereotypical notions of femininity – that girls/women should be pleasant, kind, gentle, calm, and not aggressive (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Deaux & Kite, 1993; Williams and Best, 1990). The finding that the youngest participants in this study endorsed these beliefs is consistent with studies which have showed that many dominant beliefs about femininity haven't shifted much in many decades, despite changing social and political situations including the advance of feminism (Deaux & Kite, 1993; Deaux & LaFrance, 1998; Williams & Best, 1990).

As previously mentioned, Mikki (10 years) thought that the ideal girls' body would be able to do everything perfectly. This attribute can be classified under both the theme of function and as a personal quality. In each instance it is an unrealistic expectation, one that women are unable to live up to. It may contribute to body dissatisfaction or other negative outcomes. This finding requires further investigation.

Ideal Bodies for Boys

Participants were also asked to identify the ideal body for a boy their own age. Girls and boys identified many areas that were similar to the ideal girl with the same second order themes of appearance, function, feelings and personal qualities appearing in the data.

Like the ideal girl body, the ideal boy body was dominated by appearance based qualities. Unlike the girl's ideal, the image of the image of the ideal boy body endorsed muscle as an appearance based sub-theme and physical activity as a function related sub-theme. Therefore, the ideal boy's body was intimately linked with a combination of appearance and functional qualities. These responses are consistent with earlier gendered notions that boys and men tend to focus on the functional aspects of their bodies (Franzoi, 1995). However, it also supports the proposition that

boys are increasingly focused on their physical appearance due to their increased objectification in modern Western society (Bordo, 1999; Gill et al., 2000; Pope et al., 2001; Rohlinger, 2002).

Like the ideal bodies for girls, the theme of appearance for the ideal boy was often equally defined by what it was and what it was not. Having the right 'balance' of appearance characteristics was found to be important, especially in the lower order theme of 'looks'. Muscles as they related to masculinity were of central importance. A complex balance of appearance characteristics was desired in the ideal boy body and the ideal often had arbitrarily defined limits, best identified through violations of unwritten norms. The following were identified as being present in the ideal boy body: (a) muscles – on the chest, abdominals, arms, legs and back; (b) not too many muscles; (c) upside down triangle body shape; (d) 'balanced' body; (e) tall; (f) not too tall; (g) not too short; (h) not a big bum or hips – not feminine; (i) skinny; (j) not obese; (k) looking fit and healthy; (l) clear skin; (m) no acne; (n) tanned; and (o) short hair.

Under the theme of function, a number of third order themes were identified. These were dominated by 'physical activity', but also included 'health and fitness', 'physical qualities' and 'performance'. Many of these themes were further divided into related sub-themes. For example, physical activity included specific sports such as football, bike riding, running, swimming, body boarding, cricket and baseball, many of which have been previously identified as 'masculine' sports (Kane & Synder, 1989; Metheny, 1965). Accompanying these were stereotypical beliefs held by some participants that not only should boys do more sports than girls, but they should also be better at them. This finding is consistent with widely held beliefs that sport is more important to boys than girls (Klomsten et al., 2005).

Only a small number of participants identified feelings attributed to the ideal boy body. Positive feelings again dominated participants' expectations and included feelings of happiness, competence and self control. Negative feelings were not anticipated.

Appearance Attributes Associated with the Ideal Boy Body

In examining participants' responses to what they felt was the ideal body for boys their age, two appearance qualities received a large number of endorsements by both girls and boys. The first of these was muscles. Many of the older males, but also several of the females from all age groups, felt that the ideal male should have muscles, particularly on his stomachs, chest and arms and some musculature in his legs. These expectations are consistent with earlier research (e.g., Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2006; Klomsten et al., 2005; Mishkind et al., 1986)

Lisa (15 years): Probably muscley.

Interviewer: Where is the best boy body going to have muscles?

Lisa (15 years): Probably upper region, the chest, arms. A little bit in the legs.

James (14 years): A six-pack.

Trevor (16 years): More upper body muscle, more abdominal muscle? More stomach muscle. And probably bigger pectorals.

Participants placed various limitations on the amount of muscle that was acceptable. The limitation placed on muscle size is a finding unique to this study. Earlier research has suggested 'bigger' is often regarded as 'better' and that the desired look is achievable only through the use of steroids (Pope et al., 2000a). The

expectation of boys' bodies in this study is more akin to that of girls. It is about achieving the right balance, the exact measurements of which are unknown.

Lisa (15 years): A little bit bulky, but not too massive.

James (14 years): ...little bit of muscle on ya...

Large muscles were seen as looking "stupid", excessive and likely to get you into conflict with other males.

Karl (17 years): Not too masculine, otherwise it's just stupid looking.

Karl (17 years): My mate that lifts 120 kilos, whenever we go out people look at us, meaning they like it, but it's mainly because I'm big and he's bigger muscle-wise. And people tend to start [want to start fights].

Limiting muscle size was also related to looking 'normal'. Excessive size violated arbitrary ideals of normality by being out of proportion. The desire for normal muscle size was identified even by participants in the youngest age group.

Damien (10 years): Someone normal. Not trying to look really good and make their face look really big or their muscles look really big.

Katie (16 years): It is important that it feels comfortable. Comfortable in yourself and then around other people so it would have to be in proportion to other people. It can't be huge or anything...

Karl (17 years) and Lisa (15 years) made direct connections between masculinity and musculature. Karl thought excessive muscles could make you appear 'too' masculine which was stupid looking and made you a target for aggression. He negotiated this through an active choice to camouflage his large frame.

Karl (17 years): Chicks might go for it, but at the end of the day, you're just going to get beat up by bigger people... You try to be a 'sleeper'. Be someone that's a bit bulked, but looks a bit chubby.

This suggestion constitutes an interesting incidence of performative gender. Karl (17 years) disguises what he sees as a cause of potential problems – his large body size and muscles. He resists dominant discourses about masculinity, Pacific Islander ethnicity and aggression by creating and embodying a physical appearance that looks 'less threatening' to others. Unlike other participants in this study, Karl rejects some discourses around muscularity and thinness in order to 'look' chubby, while still retaining his functional strength. Further investigation of this gendered endeavour is required as it may be a strategy employed by other Pacific Islander or Indigenous men and has implications for health promotion activities targeting obesity and physical activity in these populations.

In practice, increasing body size through muscle and fat is a more realistic goal than the addition of muscle while removing body fat. Consequently, it may contribute to fewer negative outcomes. However, this goal still requires ongoing body surveillance and monitoring, something inherently problematic.

Despite frequent mentions of the importance of muscles to the ideal boy's body, this was rarely paired with the need for strength, and never specifically with the need to move heavy objects. In fact, only two girls made mention of the quality of strength to the ideal male body suggesting that the focus on muscles was dominated by appearance purposes rather than function.

Gina (11 years): Probably strong.

Interviewer: How did the strength come across?

Katie (16 years): It's the way they carry themselves. I think with men there is also an expectation that they don't have a very big bum...I think that the upper strength is important.

The identification of muscles as an appearance ideal for boys highlights several important issues. Firstly, even the younger boys felt muscles were ideal for someone their age. This finding is consistent with earlier research highlighting the symbolic importance of muscles to men and its contribution to masculinity (Pope et al., 2000a). The development of muscles and the muscular isomorphic body shape is unrealistic for young boys. Their striving for such ideals may ultimately lead to body dissatisfaction and other negative consequences such as over exercise, steroid use and body dysmorphia (Choi et al., 2002; Olivardia et al., 2000; Peixoto Labre, 2002; Pope, et al., 1997). Fortunately, physical maturation may pull boys closer to such physical ideals with increasing age.

Secondly, the focus on muscles as an appearance quality opens boys up to the same negative experiences as girls who view their bodies in this problematic way. However, the negative consequences of engaging with these views of the self may

differ for males and females. For example, the negative consequences of employing this type of self view may be moderated for boys by their concurrent feelings of satisfaction and focus on the functionality of muscles.

Like muscles, limitations were also placed on height and weight for the ideal boy body.

Gina (11 years): Not short but not too tall.

James (14 years): Not being obese and stuff...

Two girls in the oldest age group made specific reference to their belief that the ideal boy body should not have "curves", specifically big hips, which were associated with femininity.

Katie (16 years): [In] men, big hips is a bad thing...For men it would be weird to have larger hips.

Lisa (15 years): Not too many curves, like girly curves. Like big hips...

Ideally, boy's bodies should be tallish, slender and tanned. These ideas were proposed mostly by girls in each of the age groups.

Mikki (10 years): Tall, muscley.

Gina (11 years): Skinny.

Trevor (16 years): At the moment people like tanned people

Katie (16 years) provided a good overall description of what she thought the ideal body shape for boys should be. Her description was highly consistent with previously described male ideals (Mishkind et al., 1986).

Katie (16 years):...It's really much more about the upper half than the bottom half. So maybe more like an upside down triangle figure. Sort of the focus is on the upper half. More slender bottom half and a bigger upper half...

Three participants nominated the head and facial features in their ideals for boys including hair colour, hair length and skin tone.

Gina (11 years): Nice blond hair.

Zetta (9 years): They would have short hair...

James (14 years): Having a clear face with no acne.

In most instances the idea of the ideal boy's body in regards to physical appearance was made up of a complex balance of multiple factors including muscles, height, weight, and body shape. These expectations are similar to the expectations of the ideal girl's body, suggesting that the pressures on males to conform to appearance ideals are developing in a similar manner as for girls (Bordo, 1999; Gill et al., 2000; Pope et al., 2001; Rohlinger, 2002).

Functionality of the Ideal Boy Body

The second largest number of responses regarding the ideal boy's body was associated with engagement in physical activity which fell under the broader theme of function or what the ideal boy's body should be able to do. Although functionality and

physical activity were identified as central to the ideal boy's body by the participants in this study, it was typically identified only after mention of physical attributes.

The centrality of physical activity was endorsed by almost all participants. Most participants indicated general physical activities as being important to the ideal boy. However, many participants also named specific physical activities.

Kevin (8 years): It could do things like running and jumping.

Gina (11 years): Run fast and swim fast.

Zetta (9 years): Running, playing games like cricket, t-ball, soccer, football and baseball.

Sports such as football and non-mainstream activities such as skateboarding and motorbike riding, were also identified as highly desirable.

James (14 years): Football. I couldn't play this year but I'm playing again next year.

Lisa (15 years): Probably football, the more manly sports. Not netball (laughs).

Mikki (10 years): Some of the cool boys skateboard. And a boy in my class rides a motorbike.

Many of the ideal physical activities identified endorse traditional or hegemonic male ideals containing elements of danger, risk, aggression and physical contact. They are sports typically classified as 'masculine' (Metheny, 1965; Kane & Synder, 1989).

Two of the older boys were more flexible about their views of suitable physical activity for the ideal boy. They thought that enjoyment was important and suggested activities that were fun and/or expressive such as bike riding, rather than highly masculinised sports such as football (Metheny, 1965; Kane & Synder, 1989).

James (14 years): Just do what you enjoy doing. Say you enjoy running, just run. Enjoy bike riding, bike ride.

Karl (17 years): Depends on what they like. If they're like me, sporty, they should use it for sports. Get a sport's physique.

Although Karl (17 years) thought that the ideal boy's body should reflect his individual interests, he also believed that it should be developed.

Karl (17 years): You get kids that are into bikes and they don't need the upper [body]. Motor bikes and cars, they only need their upper body done. If you get people that go to the beach, they need more leg power than arm power.

This response is similar to those found in many girls, except that the focus of body work is on transformation with a functional rather than appearance purpose.

Although James (14 years) was not explicitly competitive with others, the importance

to the ideal boy body of being "good" at what you do was conveyed by him. A degree of comparison with others would be inherent in order to determine what performance was good enough and what was not.

James (14 years) also thought it important not to "mistreat" the ideal boy body and specifically referred to the misuse of alcohol, smoking and drugs. Despite this focus on preventative health, the same participant spoke with pride about the many times that he had continued to do dangerous tricks and ride while injured.

James (14 years): Be good at what you like doing. Just use [your body] properly, don't mistreat it.

James's (14 years) beliefs about doing no harm to the ideal boy body appear to stand in contradiction to his treatment of his own body. This apparent contradiction may be reconciled through an understanding of the version of masculinity James is adopting or performing. James might be seen as simultaneously 'being' boy through the harsh physical treatment of his body and 'resisting' boy by rejecting misuses of his body in other ways like smoking and alcohol use. Like the boys in the research by Plum ridge et al., (2002) bike riding may provide James with a route to 'coolness' or a valued alternative version of masculinity. While this makes James resistant to some contemporary pressures facing young men, such as drinking and smoking facing young men, he is still at ongoing risk of injury by engaging in dangerous physical activities with little or no protective gear and by participating injured. It is possible that psycho-educational programs in schools may also have contributed to reinforcing drinking, smoking and taking drugs as an undesirable identity by highlighting the

incompatibility with other desired identities such as that of the athlete. Further qualitative and quantitative studies are required for continued exploration of the impact that concurrently held beliefs and identities have on young people's choices.

Mikki, (10 years), a competitive tennis player who competed against and beat many boys, expressed the view that boys should not only do sports but they should do more sports and be better at them than girls. Similarly, the oldest girl Katie (16 years) expressed a stereotypical view about how men are naturally physically superior to women.

Mikki (10 years): They like lots of sports and [are] better [at them]. Probably [they do] more than the girl and just do it way better...

Katie (16 years): With men I think that moving, running and stuff, I don't know why, but I just feel men are more typical to run and stuff than women. It's also imposed on them that they are to do things that don't require speed.

Mikki's (10 years) and Katie's (16 years) responses reflects the ongoing socialization experiences of girls and are consistent with how girls have been found to feel less able and competent than boys at various physical activity skills, even those that neither have learned (Corbin et al., 1983; Feltz et al., 1989; George, 1994; Vealey, 1986). Mikki holds this belief despite evidence to the contrary, which testifies to its power even in a 10 year old who is striving to portray a 'non-girly' physical appearance.

None of the participants mentioned the need for the ideal male to perform extreme and potentially injurious acts either as a functional ability or as a character trait. The absence of this finding was surprising given that several boys were engaging in and highly valuing these activities.

However, an expressed need for engagement in physical activity for the ideal boy body was not unanimous. Trea (13) did not think that there was an ideal boy body at all; she thought all bodies were ideal. Damien (10 years), who has had many periods of physical inactivity due to ongoing injury, also did not think it important for the ideal boy's body to participate in physical activity despite the fact he was active even when injured. This description might provide evidence of a young boy who has successfully rejected physical activity, as an essential masculine trait, but who remains physically active despite this. Individually, Damien may have developed a more holistic belief system regarding the role of physical activity in his life based on his own experience of injury. In terms of performative gender, this may equate to the embodiment of 'resisting' boy. A better understanding of how individual belief systems and identity impact on physical activity is needed.

Personal Qualities of the Ideal Boy Body

Damien (10 years) and Zetta (9 years) were the only participants to make mention of personal qualities important to the ideal boy's body. Damien mentioned a number of qualities related to helping others and expressing themselves, while Zetta simply thought that the ideal male body should be "sensible".

Damien (10 years): Always encouraging people to do good things. Never do bad things. Help people when they need it, when they're down, when they're sad. When they are sad they should express it and tell people about it.

As a 10 year old boy, Damien appears able to resist several discourses associated with masculinity. He endorses good behaviours, helping other and expressing emotion, qualities more traditionally associated with femininity. Within a performative gender framework Damien may be seen as 'resisting' boy in ways different to the other males in the study.

Feelings Attributed to the Ideal Boy Body

Although none of the participants provided answers about this spontaneously, when prompted they indicated that anyone who had the ideal boy body would probably feel positively about themselves. Words such as "happy", "good" and "comfortable", both within themselves and around other people, were used.

Luke (11 years): Good all the time

Lisa (15 years): Probably not self conscious. Alright with their body. Again, wear what they like.

Similar to expectations of the ideal girl, these concepts are unrealistic. Such responses reflect a lack of realism both in terms of the goal, an ideal body, and the likely outcome, feeling great all the time. Adoption of such beliefs therefore may result in negative consequences for any individual who ascribes to them.

Karl (17 years) described the importance of feelings proud and capable. He was the only participant of either gender to hint at the importance of self-mastery. Self-mastery is also one of the few areas that doesn't involve the monitoring and influence of others.

Karl (17 years): Feel like you can almost do anything. Not do it to show off, but just to be able to do it and know you can do it and you don't have to do it.

Only Mikki (10 years), one of the younger girls, thought that even those with the ideal boy's body might find something they did not like about themselves although she did not fully understand why.

Mikki (10 years): I wouldn't be disappointed if I looked nice. I reckon people put themselves down too much. If they look really good and everything, they still try and find the tinniest things and change it.

While Mikki (10 years) criticised people's tendency to find fault with their appearances she implied at the same time that she did not look ideally good either. Like the other participants she reconciled this with the unrealistic idea that if she did look nice then she would feel good about herself and not need to find faults to change.

Two male participants, Kevin (8 years) and Trevor (16 years) explicitly stated that their bodies were close to the ideal. Trea (13) also suggested the same by maintaining that all bodies were the best, indirectly reasoning that her own also fell into that category.

Trevor (16 years): Everything that it can do... I can do now. There's nothing that I can't do. Everyone can do something and it's just that other people can do it better than others.

Trea (13): There is no ideal. There is no best. They are all the best.

These boys' responses indicate that they view themselves as having aspects of 'idealness' in their own bodies. This finding is consistent with their earlier views that, while some boys identified negative aspects to their bodies, many identified simultaneous positives. These responses indicate that these boys have the ability to manage conflicting experiences by simultaneously accepting that both positions are true. Many girls, on the other hand, appear to view their bodies more dichotomously, identifying positive or negative attributes as 'all or none'. The boys' ability to view themselves as they do may offer some resistance to them feeling as dissatisfied with their bodies than girls do. This gender based assertion requires further investigation.

CHAPTER 5: FINAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overview

The two studies reported in this thesis offer complementary perspectives on young peoples' perceptions and experiences of their bodies. Study 1 offers a quantitative understanding of gender and developmental differences in physical self-concept, self-objectification and socio-cultural attitudes to appearance for girls and boys, particularly within the context of physical activity. The results of study 1 confirm many of the expected gender differences previously found in the literature. For example, boys have higher physical activity levels than girls. Boys also score more highly overall in other body-related concepts such as physical self-concept and self-objectification.

The initial study also successfully extends previous findings to include pre-adolescent boys and girls. This extension demonstrates the relevance of issues such as self-objectification to children as young as eight years of age. Few age group differences in measures of socio-cultural attitudes to appearance, self-objectification and physical self-concept were revealed, suggesting that many body-related concepts are already established in pre-adolescence and remain reasonably stable throughout those years, for both boys and girls. This finding is consistent with earlier research (e.g., Crain & Bracken, 1994; Hagger et al., 2005). Self-perceptions of physical attractiveness show a particularly strong relationship with physical self-concept for girls and boys across all age groups, suggesting that the relationship is a powerful force in young peoples' lives, regardless of age and gender. This finding is consistent with the previous research and literature (e.g., Burnett, 1994; Boiven et al., 1992; Fox, 1997; Raustorp et al., 2005) and extends previous findings to include even younger participants.

While revealing important gender differences in young peoples' experiences, study 1 was unable to explore in depth 'how' young people 'live' self-objectification or physical self-concept. Study 1 was also unable to capture the different lived expressions of these constructs or how these constructs might differ with context. The use of one-dimensional static measures did not allow for the exploration of participants' negotiations with their environments'. Therefore, study 2 employed a complementary qualitative methodology to explore participants 'lived' experiences of their physical bodies within different contexts. It is important to note that moving from a psychological and developmental perspective in study 1 to a constructivist perspective in study 2 is complex. Direct translation of scores found in study 1 is not possible using a qualitative framework. Rather, the two studies provide alternative perspectives and complementary information. As a general rule, the quantitative data was used a starting point for describing the experiences of participants as a collective. It is possible even with this type of data to apply a social-constructivist and cultural studies approach to understanding and interpreting the results. The qualitative data was then used to explore these same concepts at the level of individuals, again using the same frameworks to seek further understanding.

As in study 1, physical appearance was identified as important in study 2 to the majority of participants, both girls and boys of all ages. The language used by participants shows that idealised physical appearance is dominated by the individual's need to have visible attributes 'in the right balance'; that is, participants could not have 'too little' or 'too much' weight, height, muscles etc. This aspect of importance about their physical appearance demands a complex balancing of physical attributes that can only be achieved through constant monitoring of the self and the bodies of others. These findings appear to reflect lived experiences, whereby participants' views

of themselves are dominated by appearance-based attributes versus non-observable attributes. However, the experience of self-objectification as articulated by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) is perhaps most obvious in the lived experiences of the two oldest girls in the study who described how they experienced body dissatisfaction, judging their bodies as they imagined others would and focusing on external appearances, even when they were alone and no audience was present.

Despite small subject numbers, some gender differences were indicated in study 2. For example, while both males and females identified physical appearance as important to their concepts of their body, several boys also identified the functional qualities of physical activity as central. Furthermore, while boys and girls both experienced dissatisfaction and identified areas of desired change, boys tended to describe more concurrent positive feelings about their bodies. The areas identified for change were also more realistic and less drastic for boys than for the girls.

For both girls and boys in study 2, the presence of same and opposite sex peers (not friends), inside and outside of school, was associated with more negative experiences. Contexts containing peers were associated with changes to what was important to participants about their bodies, how they felt about them and how they used them.

Teasing and the possibility of teasing, appeared to be a particularly powerful influence for most participants. Teasing was associated with the actual or potential presence of peers who were identified as judgemental. It could be argued that it is these peers, same and opposite sex, who embody the external view of 'others' for most participants in this study. As such it is possible that teasing and possibility of teasing is an important mechanism or aspect of self-objectification in young people of these age groups.

Gender also appeared to impact on physical activity participation in complex ways. For many boys, participation in physical activity was consistent with, and supportive of, their desired masculine identity as a 'risk taker'. Physical activity also served an important social function whereby even adolescent boys continued to 'play' physically together. Conversely, most girls did not continue to play in similar ways as they aged. Many girls actively sought out feminine identities primarily obtained through physical appearance and participation in other activities such as drama and shopping. Therefore, girls are at risk of missing out on many of the benefits of participation in physical activity.

The various identities that seemed to be adopted by participants appear to have strong connections to the type of performative gender described by Usner (1997). This framework is useful in understanding the ways in which participants were able to navigate and negotiate complexities and apparent contradictions in their beliefs and experiences. Both boys and girls appeared to move between multiple positions. Girls shifted between 'being', 'doing' and 'resisting' girl while boys moved between various expressions of 'being', 'doing' and 'resisting' boy. While some performances may have looked like 'parodying' boy at first glance, behaviours were better representative of an alternative and exaggerated expression of 'being' boy. Performative gender enabled boys and girls to negotiate and participate in seemingly incompatible beliefs and behaviours.

The qualitative findings of study 2 also reveal experiences that may impact on the interpretation of the findings of study 1 related to physical self-concept and self-objectification. In study 2, several female participants described the importance of being 'fit and healthy'. While the concept may appear to be a functional, non-appearance-based attribute of importance, further examination of responses suggests

that in several instances the girls wished to 'look' fit and healthy (i.e., not overweight) rather than actually 'be' fit and healthy in the physiological or functional sense. Similarly, muscles were identified as important to many male participants, but this was not always in the context of physical strength. Therefore, it is possible that, although many participants use the 'language' of functionality, in some cases it may relate to appearance qualities, thus distorting the scores on some quantitative measures such as the SOQ and PSPP-CY.

The findings of the two studies are complementary and consistent with much of the past literature. In addition, study 2 reveals how contextual differences impact profoundly on young peoples' experiences of themselves in and outside the context of physical activity. Study 2 also offers possible insights into alternative interventions for increasing the participation of young people in adequate amounts of physical activity. In particular, it is argued that interventions designed to increase knowledge about the health benefits of physical activity and those that attempt to break down structural barriers to physical activity will be met with only limited success. This is because physical activity serves multiple purposes and has different meanings, including complex gendered meaning. Such meanings apply to young people of both genders. Therefore, interventions need also to take this into account and find ways of allowing individuals the ability to embody a favoured identity while still meeting their physical activity needs. For example, allowing girls who seek a feminine identity to do so while still providing them with vigorous physical activity. However, perhaps more importantly interventions may also need to be at different educational levels e.g., not just educating young people about the benefits of being physically healthy but rather teaching them to be critical thinkers who are better able to analyse and

make sense of the various marketing and advertising that is aimed at them. Teaching young people these types of skills may ultimately enable them to create new definitions and standards of what is considered feminine.

Methodological Challenges

The data collected in study 2 is rich, deep and complex, making its interpretation challenging. Definitive answers are neither possible nor sought after. Qualitative data always contains multiple perspectives, including those of participants, researchers and the existing literature (Appleton, 1997; de Laine, 1997; Charmaz, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Stratton, 1997). This complexity and depth is not a flaw in research design, but rather an important consideration for all qualitative studies.

Further challenge was found in attempting to integrate and make cohesive sense of the earlier quantitative data and then the large body of qualitative data. Although the methodologies used were very different, they were similar in that data interpretation was guided by the same theoretical frameworks – e.g., feminist and social constructivist theories. For example, in study one this was evident through examination of concepts such self-objectification and socio-cultural attitudes to appearance in both girls and boys. In study 2, similar concepts were examined this time using semi-structured interviews. The use of these same guiding frameworks is also evident in the discussions of both studies where interpretations of results are made. Using consistent underlying theoretical frameworks provides the overall thesis with consistency, despite the use of diverging methodologies.

Study 2 utilised a novel approach to elicit data from participants. Drawings were used to engage participants in an age-appropriate way. The study found the use of drawings to be a successful way of eliciting complex views and experiences.

Finally, qualitative studies typically only include relatively small subject numbers. There were only 12 participants in this study with ages ranging from eight to 17 years of age. It is not possible to generalise findings in the same ways as can be done with the quantitative data. Furthermore, within the sample used in study 2 some experiences were not represented at all. For example, none of the young people interviewed were underweight. However, the participants in study 2 were representative of the wider population in many ways, having varied ethnic backgrounds, physical activity habits, body sizes and shapes.

Major Findings and Implications

Lack of Age Group Differences in the Data

Study 1 revealed no statistically significant age differences in self-objectification, socio-cultural attitudes to appearance and physical self-concept between the different age groups used in this study, despite finding some large and medium effect sizes, particularly for girls in relation to physical self-concept. This finding lends support towards for the position that many of the body-related attitudes and beliefs are already firmly established by late childhood and remain relatively stable through to end of adolescence. This is supported by previous research (e.g., Crain & Bracken, 1994; Hagger et al., 2005).

These findings have two major implications. The first raises the question of how young people manage to participate in physical activity at higher levels at younger ages when they are not able to do so at older ages, despite the relative stability of body-related concepts. Environmental issues such as the transition from primary school to high school may account for a decrease in compulsory physical activity. Other answers to this question may be found in the findings of study 2 which revealed some gender-based differences in the aspects of bodies important to

participants. Study 2 indicated that although physical appearance dominated most participants' aspects of importance, boys were more likely than girls to identify physical activity as having an important functional and identity role in their lives concurrently. The older boys in this study continued to participate in physical activity with increasing age more so than the girls; however, it was the context and type of physical activity that was of most interest. The older boys in this study were mostly engaged in non-organised, non-competitive physical activities, such as bike riding, which served multiple purposes. For these boys, bike riding was what they 'did' with their mates. It was social and recreational, but also reflected who they were in a gendered sense (i.e., brave, risk-taking and daring). Bike riding reflected something they were good at, something that helped them meet their goals of staying fit and healthy and provided them with a sense of physical mastery over a difficult task. This complex combination of aspects of importance was rarely found for the girls in the context of physical activity, particularly with increasing age.

While the youngest girls described participating in unstructured games and activities with other girls and boys, this behaviour was not identified in any of the older girls who had other preferred activities that they did with girl friends. They named drama performances and shopping. While, the younger girls' unstructured physical activity disappeared with age, it remained more stable for many of the boys, even when participation in organised sports decreased.

Thus, boys receive a wide range of benefits from participation in physical activity. They gain physical competence, sensory and health benefits, social benefits and enhanced masculine identity as risk takers. For boys in this study, physical activity appears to provide them with consistent ways of meeting these goals from childhood through to adolescence. Conversely, girls describe less varied benefits from

participation in physical activity. At younger ages they describe some social benefits, but, by adolescence, girls no longer describe socialising with each other primarily through physical activity. Furthermore, physical activity does not provide the boost to feminine identity which is strongly tied to physical appearance. In fact, physical activity may detract from that goal. Furthermore, the organised physical activity that does take place often occurs within the school context, in the company of peers, those most likely to negatively impact on the girls' experiences and feelings about themselves. This is a further possible explanation of the age and gender differences in participation in physical activity found across the period of late childhood to late adolescence.

Finding ways of engaging friendship groups, particularly those of girls, in physical activity is important and may hold the potential for increasing sustained participation. Schools are major stakeholders in the lives of young people and are likely to be central in promoting and celebrating alternative forms of physical activity for girls and boys. The powerful contextual influence of peers needs also to be accounted for in any attempted interventions. Simply taking girls out of the eyes of boys may be insufficient to impact on physical activity choices, as same sex peers are also extremely influential.

The failure to find significant age group differences also has implications for intervention strategies aimed at increasing physical activity. Intervention strategies targeting body-based concepts and perceptions should ideally occur earlier rather than later. Initiating interventions early in life serves the dual purpose of targeting young people at their peak in terms of physical activity participation and prior to reductions in some aspects of self-concept for girls. Targeting older adolescents may be more difficult as belief systems have become more entrenched.

The experiences of Mikki (10 years) are relevant in this context. Although Mikki resisted a feminine appearance and was successful at competitive sports, she continued to hold beliefs that boys should do more sport than girls and be better at it. This finding suggests that, at least in Mikki's case, beliefs and behaviours regarding participation in physical activity are not particularly congruent. Several older girls showed greater congruency by stating that they did not like physical activity and did not do it much or that they liked some forms of activity and did it moderately. It might be that children are simply less able to live their beliefs at younger ages when parents and school are strongly influential in their physical activity habits, whereas adolescents have increasing independence and are better able to live their own choices and beliefs. Future research should seek to examine this proposition as early beliefs about physical activity may also offer better predictions of future participation than early participation on its own.

Gender Differences in Self-Objectification

Study 1 reveals expected gender differences in self-objectification with girls scoring more highly on measures than boys overall (e.g., Hebl et al., 2004; McKinley & Hyde, 1996; Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004). Study 2 highlights the dominance of physical appearance in most participants' responses, boys and girls, about what was important to them about their bodies and what they saw as ideal in the bodies of others. However, study 2 also reveals other 'lived' experiences that may show how self-objectification is experienced differently by girls and boys, thus accounting for some of the gender differences found.

In study 2, despite similarities in higher order themes, girls and boys showed differences at the lower levels of coding which may help to explain girls' higher levels of self-objectification. For example, while both girls and boys highlighted the

centrality of physical appearance to them, the boys in this study were more likely than the girls to identify physical activity as simultaneously important to them. In addition, although both girls and boys identified negative feelings associated with their bodies, boys were more likely to report concurrent positive feelings, without qualifiers. For example, boys provided clear descriptions and examples of the aspects of their bodies they felt positively about, whereas girls were more tentative in their answers and were more likely to moderate their positive aspects or feelings in some way. Regarding body changes, boys were also more likely to desire changes to their bodies that were realistically more possible than the underlying structural body changes desired by some girls. For example, some boys desired increased weight and musculature while two girls held a desire for thinner feet. All these differences in desired body changes may reflect higher levels of unrealistic body expectations in girls than boys. These factors may contribute to girls having different and more unrealistic focus on external appearances than boys, with fewer protective factors than many of the boys, thus enhancing the conditions for self-objectification.

Teasing, Peers, Self-Objectification and the Externalised Other

Self-objectification theory purports that individuals internalise an externalised view of themselves, viewing themselves as an outsider would and focusing on appearance-based qualities as opposed to functional abilities (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). Developed out of feminist theory, the imagined gaze of another has mostly been described with the other as male (McKinley & Hyde, 1996; Spitzack, 1990; Young, 1980). Descriptions by participants in the current study, however, suggest that the real or imagined externalised gaze may originate from individuals of either gender. This is consistent with Foucaultian interpretations of the power of possible observation in his writings about panoptic view (Foucault, 1979).

In his writings, the gender of the observer is not raised as a critical factor, the most crucial factor is that observation by another is possible at any time and when this occurs it can become internalised and self-imposed. The most critical imagined audiences for most of the participants in this study, boys and girls, were peers - those young people not intimately known to them and/or those perceived to be in 'higher' social groups. This finding is consistent with the earlier work of Jones (2001) who found peers the most frequent targets of social comparison for physical appearance attributes such as weight and height. These peers were consistently identified as the most powerful source of scrutiny, judgement and possibly teasing. However, like the externalised male gaze, the non-gender specific externalised gaze described in study 2 still reflects hegemonic feminine ideals found in patriarchal societies. For example, the feminine ideals sought focused on external appearances, and slenderness, within limits, was particularly valued.

Regardless of the perceived gender of the externalised gaze, the standards expected are similar, but more complex, than those previously described in the literature. Previous studies have reported ideals such as women consistently wishing to be thinner and males desiring to be leaner or bigger with increased musculature (e.g., Brodie et al., 1994; Cohane & Pope, 2001; Cohn & Adler, 1992; Collins, 1991; Gustafson-Larson & Terry, 1992; Grogan & Wainwright, 1996; Hill & Pallin, 1998; Levinson et al., 1986; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003; Mishkind et al., 1986; Moore, 1990; Page & Allen, 1995; Parks & Read, 1997; Pine, 2001; Pope et al., 2000a; Rolland et al., 1997; Schur et al., 2000; Silberstein et al., 1998; Staffieri, 1967). Most participants in the current research reported aspects of importance and ideals that were a complex balance of just the right amount, that is, not too little or too much, of

several physical attributes. Thus, physical appearance standards are problematic due to their unrealistic nature. Further, they are impossible to achieve due to their lack of definition and changing and arbitrary nature.

Participant descriptions of what is important to them about their bodies and what they saw as ideal were full of language reflecting the need to obtain the correct balance between 'too little' and 'too much' of given physical attributes. These findings are consistent with Kirk and Tinning's (1994) finding that "the standards of acceptable physicality for girls and boys are matters of degree" (*p.*618). In practice, the other problematic aspect of such beliefs is that obtaining the correct balance of appearance qualities and achieving 'normality' will therefore demand the constant monitoring of the physical presentations of others, constant comparison with these, as well as self surveillance, even when those others are not physically present. Such lived experiences provide optimal conditions for self-objectification.

Teasing and the potential for teasing from peers is a powerful social mechanism that reinforces ever shifting standards and the belief that someone is always watching. A number of participants, young and old, raised the issue of teasing, particularly from same age peers as an issue that impacted on them. It is possible that these peers embody the perceived then internalised external gaze of others, as described in self-objectification. Teasing and the negative experiences it creates may provide a strong motivation for sustained self-scrutiny. Participants of study 2 also appeared to use these external sources of scrutiny to monitor themselves, something that was most obvious in the oldest girls who expressed body dissatisfaction even when alone. Therefore, this finding provides some important further evidence that teasing may serve as an objectifying experience for young people as earlier proposed by Smolak and Levine (2001). However, the broader

results of study 2 would suggest that this is true for both girls and boys, not just girls, as has been described in previous research. This appears to be a context unique to children but it perhaps lays the foundation for later self-objectifying experiences in adulthood. Further exploration of the relationship between teasing and its contribution to self-objectification in young people is an important area for future research.

Unexpectedly, many participants explicitly described the importance of matching or mirroring the appearance and/or behaviour of others. Both girls and boys described their views of similarities with others. In the younger participants, this was at the concrete level of physical appearance, while for older participants, both males and females, it was also evident in posturing, body language and other social behaviours. It had been anticipated that this 'copying' of others was something that participants did with little consciousness which is consistent with biological evidence of 'mirror neurons' (Fabbri-Destro & Rizzolatti, 2008). However, participants' responses suggest that, at least in some instances, this is a conscious choice, albeit a choice laden with socio-political consequences. Bordo (1993) and Butler (1990) argue that choices under such pressures are, in fact, not real choices. However, using a framework of performative gender, such choices might be viewed as purposeful, and reflecting differing levels of individual agency.

"Fit and Healthy" as an Appearance Quality

Study 1 also revealed comparatively low scores for both boys and girls on the self-objectification measure. One possible explanation for this could be that participants were all from religious affiliated independent schools. It is possible that religious messages may have resulted in the decreased self-objectification scores consistent with some similar earlier studies (e.g., Boyatzis et al., 2007; Boyatziz &

Walsh, 2006; Mahoney et al., 2005). However, study 2 also provides an alternative explanation for this finding, which may better reflect young peoples' ongoing exposure to media presentations of ideal bodies.

With the increasing commercialisation of the health and fitness industries it is possible that audiences, including young people, are increasingly exposed to images that link health and fitness with achieving idealised physical appearances. In fact, in other studies, many men and women describe participating in physical activity primarily for the purposes of image enhancement such as weight loss and toning (Silberstein et al., 1988; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005; Tiggemann & Williamson, 2000). In describing what is important to them about their bodies, the participants of study 2 often cited 'fitness' and 'health' as issues. However, further investigation of responses showed that in some instances the focus was, in fact, on appearance. Participants sought to 'look fit and healthy' as opposed to seeking to 'being fit and healthy' in the functional sense. This was particularly the case for the girls. It is also consistent with girls' and boys' repeated desires for achieving appropriate levels of thinness and the ongoing association between weight and idealised appearance, fitness and health for participants in this study. This is also consistent with earlier findings by Greenleaf (2002) who revealed many physical descriptions included in participants expressed desire to be 'fit'. Kirk and Tinning (1994) also found that girls and boys in their study were "party to the construction and legitimation of notions that slenderness, for instance, is a sign that an individual is fit and, by imputation, healthy" (p.620).

It is possible, therefore, that although many female participants in study 1 endorsed the importance of being 'fit' and 'healthy' to their physical self-concept on the self-objectification questionnaire (a function-related item), based on the findings

of study 2, endorsement may actually reflect a focus on the observable/appearance-based aspects of these items. This supposition is also supported by the fact that few girls identified improvements in 'fitness' or 'health' under changes they would make to their bodies; rather, changes tended to focus on aspects of physical appearance in study 2. Therefore, female participants' endorsement of 'health' and 'fitness' items on the SOQ may have erroneously reduced their self-objectification scores. As a result, self-objectification or inviting the 'gaze' may have impacted on these girls to the extent that what used to be considered 'function' related language has now also come to be associated with the importance of external appearances. This may have occurred to the extent that further language changes are required in the questionnaires themselves to ensure that they are assessing what it is they think they are assessing. This contention requires further exploration and confirmation.

The finding that the desire for 'fitness and health' may be associated with external appearances also has implications for strategies and programs targeting increases in physical activity in young people. For example, while individuals may say that they want to increase their health and fitness, their emphasis may really be on appearance-based outcomes, something found to be associated with less sustained physical activity (Mutrie & Choi, 2000). Public health administrators need to be aware of the different motivations for participation in physical activity and the semantics used to describe these goals because the intervention strategies needed to address physical activity issues are likely to be very different for boys and girls.

Some interventions need to focus on creative ways of encouraging individuals to view their bodies in different ways, reducing the focus on physical appearance while still engaging audiences interested in this. Strategies that inadvertently or

deliberately endorse a focus on appearance-based qualities may result in increases in participants' physical activity levels in the short-term, but leave problematic thinking about the body unchanged or even increased.

Interventions aimed at increasing individuals' levels of knowledge about the health and fitness benefits of physical activity may be limited in their capacity to change attitudes and behaviour associated with other competing goals. The attempts of the "Active Australia" campaign highlight how increased knowledge does not necessarily result in shifting attitudes or behaviours associated with physical activity engagement (Armstrong, Bauman & Davies, 2000). Therefore, while existing campaigns may emphasize the health and other functional benefits of physical activity, many participants are not striving for this or they see such benefits as secondary to improvements to appearance, limiting the potential impact of such campaigns. Clearly, complex strategies are needed to simultaneously address issues of exercising for appearance purposes and for engaging in physical activity.

Muscles

The presence of muscles was cited as important to the male body by both girls and boys. Although some participants made reference to the uses of such muscles, more often participants' focus was on the appearance qualities of these muscles with little or no reference to the functional characteristic of strength. This finding may reflect increasing media presence of muscularised images of men (Leit et al., 2000; Olivardia et al., 2004).

Participants' responses, however, differed from earlier hegemonic ideals of male muscularity in which 'bigger' was seen as better (Pope et al., 2000a). The hyper-muscular look for men has been cited as unrealistic and unobtainable without the use of dangerous practices such as the use of anabolic steroids or excessive exercise and

training (Pope et al., 2000a). Both the girls and boys in study 2 emphasised the need to limit male muscles, in much the same way that limits had previously been applied to women's muscularity. However, shifts in what is seen as ideal in terms of muscles do not appear to have been driven by these dangerous practices but rather by shifting social standards of beauty. The hyper-muscular look was labelled by study 2 participants as looking 'abnormal' and 'stupid'.

Despite the alternative focus of the young people in this study, the current ideal suggested by study 2 participants poses different problems for young males than for young females. Like the female participants, boys must now find the correct balance of enough muscle, not too little and not too much, which can only be obtained through focusing on physical appearance and requires constant self-surveillance as well as comparison to others. Negative outcomes, such as increasing self-objectification and its consequences, are likely to result. It is also important to note that information and resource materials about the risk of eating disorders are now easily found in many women's and teen magazines and on the internet, whereas much less comparative information is devoted to boys and men regarding obtaining ideal musculature.

Contextual Influences in Physical Self-Concept

Study 1 provides a strong but static overall picture of the body-related concepts under examination. Study 2 highlights the fluidity of participants' experiences of their bodies across multiple contexts consistent with those found in earlier studies (e.g., Davison, 2000; George, 2005; Greenleaf, 2002; Krane et al., 2004). Unlike these previous studies that reveal contextual differences between the

sporting and social arena's, participants in study 2 described a wider variety of contexts associated with changes in importance about their bodies, as well as changes in feelings and behaviour.

The school context presents several issues to the participants in this study. Firstly, it is a site filled with same and opposite sex peers who, it has been argued, represent the externalised gaze of others. Secondly, the presence of peers was consistently associated with potential and actual teasing. Several participants suggested that teasing, regardless the context, resulted in them feeling more negatively about their bodies. This finding most likely reflects the importance of physical appearance to an individuals' overall physical self-concept and self-esteem. This is supported by the quantitative findings of study 1 and previous research (e.g., Burnett, 1994; Fox, 1997; Raustorp et al., 2005). Given the prevalence of bullying in the Australian context (e.g., Delfabbro et al., 2006; Forero, McLellan, Rissel, & Bauman, 1989), teasing and bullying is likely to be a powerful contributor to young people's feelings about their bodies. However, this finding also suggests that successful bullying interventions may have the potential to impact on participants' feelings about their bodies, even when not specifically targeting this.

Family and friends were repeatedly identified as individuals around whom self-surveillance and comparison with others was minimised. Participants described predominantly positive experiences in the company of these individuals. It may be that interventions to promote physical activity within the context of families have the potential to reduce the demands for self-surveillance and monitoring of others.

Interventions encompassing families may have the potential to increase the likelihood of experiencing other positive aspects of physical activity such as physical mastery or sensation, in addition to providing positive role modelling and healthy behavioural habits.

For boys, physical activity took place largely in the context of friendships, both inside and outside of school hours. The boys reported many positive experiences and positive feelings associated with this. For girls, physical activity was described as taking place at school in the context of peers rather than friends, and resulted in several participants feeling a variety of negative feelings regarding their bodies. Some girls described a desire to hide and used a variety of strategies to do so, from varying their clothing to avoiding physical education classes entirely. Physical activity that occurred outside of school for girls also typically occurred among peers rather than friends, but was generally identified as more positive than that occurring at school. As a result, physical activity occurred in, and provided different contextual experiences, for boys and girls. For boys, where the context was often dominated by friends, the experience was related to more positive feelings about the activity and their bodies. For girls, the contexts were dominated by peers, both same and opposite sex, and physical activity was generally not associated with positive experiences. The gender differences revealed in this research suggest that intervention strategies aimed at increasing participation levels in physical activity need to be different for girls and boys.

Agency and Performative Gender

Both the girls and boys in study 2 also described executing agency in the presentation and performances of their bodies across different contexts. Mirroring of the behaviour, body language and dress of others was encountered in participants of all ages and in the boys as well as the girls.

Adopting the framework of performative gender described by Usser (1997) provides a useful framework for understanding the contradictions and negotiations found in participants' descriptions of their lived experiences, something impossible to comprehend using a single static measure. Girls such as Katie (16) could be seen to be 'wanting it all', desiring the physical appearance aspects of hegemonic femininity but with several of the performance qualities typically associated with hegemonic masculinity. These include strength and the capacity to defend oneself. Katie could be seen as moving predominantly between positions of 'being' and 'resisting' girl. One of the younger participants, Mikki (10), actively 'resisted' girl by distancing herself from feminine appearance qualities and participating in competitive sports. She simultaneously may be seen as 'being' girl in the adoption of beliefs about the inherent superiority of males in sport, despite substantial contrary evidence from her own life.

Performative gender was also a useful framework for understanding the fluidity of experiences described by the boys in study 2. The study provides a unique opportunity to consider what such a framework would look like for boys. Conceptually, 'being' boy offered two alternative expressions for boys endorsing and embodying traditional hegemonic beliefs about appearance, relationships to others and behaviours. Being boy might be evidenced in boys who desire to look and be physically strong, who view their bodies as machines and engage in competitive

physical activity that is forceful and violent. They view women as the weaker sex rather than merely different. Contemporary versions of 'being' boy value the importance of physical appearance and of looking masculine (muscular within limits) and attractive to the opposite sex. However, an alternative expression of 'being' boy may be found in those 'exaggerating' boy. Such boys might reject competitive sport but continue to perpetrate violence against themselves by engaging in dangerous, risk taking and self denigrating behaviours. They continue to play when injured and see endurance of pain as a measure of masculinity. Looking attractive and masculine remains important and their relationship with women remains unchallenged. Their embodied performances may be confused with 'parodying' or 'resisting' boy if viewed uncritically. However, the only challenges to hegemonic masculinity which can be identified are replaced with equally dominating assumptions and beliefs.

Several of the older boys might be identified as 'being' boy when participating in dangerous, skilful, physical acts such as off road bike riding and riding when injured. Individuals like Karl (17) also showed instances of 'resisting' boy through the avoidance of violent confrontations despite his large frame. The boys did not appear to 'do' boy as regularly as the girls 'did' girl. Damien (10 years) showed some evidence of 'doing' boy when he took an interest in 'looking good' when attending uniform free days. He did this by choosing camouflage army clothes that might be seen as highly masculine, yet he was careful to ensure that his clothing was colour coordinated. There were few other examples of gendered performances of this nature found in the other male participants.

For the male participants, study 2 also revealed that particular body performances may reflect current emerging ways of 'being' boy, which, although not necessarily representing the hegemonic form, are still crucial to the gendered identify

of these boys. Karl (17) and Travis (14) both described a version of masculinity that performed dangerous and painful physical acts even when injured. Karl's descriptions also included a degree of self degradation within this context. The descriptions provided by Karl and Travis are something akin to the jackass performance previously described whereby young males appear to simultaneously 'be', 'do', 'resist' and 'parody' boy. In such scenarios, boys simultaneously embrace and reject elements of hegemonic masculinity by adopting marginalised positions. These boys produce and promote performances and alternative versions of masculinity that celebrate danger and reward risk taking and self-derogation (Brayton, 2007). This is a behaviour requiring monitoring as it has serious health implications for a sub-population which already has elevated rates of injury (Belechri, et al., 2001). Therefore, this embodied performance does not provide a healthy alternative to traditional hegemonic masculinity.

Alternative Focuses

Study 2 also revealed sensory experiences such as doing bike tricks or swimming underwater, as being important and positive for some participants. Sensory experiences may also prove an interesting area for future interventions. Interventions that promote this aspect of embodied experience may be important alternatives to activities that focus on appearance. Interventions that focus on sensation may also be a focus salient to adolescents who often enjoy sensory experiences in other contexts, for example, choosing thrill seeking rides at theme parks.

Teaching skills that enhance the ability to focus on sensory experiences, such as 'mindfulness', may also be helpful. Mindfulness directs individuals to focus on one's 'here and now' experiences without judgement. It is currently being used to

promote relaxation and treat many mental health conditions including those experienced by adolescents (see Melbourne Academic Mindfulness Interest Group, 2006 for a review).

Conclusion

The two studies in this thesis used complementary quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explore gender and developmental differences in young people's perceptions and experiences of their bodies. The results of this research revealed a number of key findings which have important implications for future interventions aimed at addressing body image concerns and improving young people's engagement with physical activity.

The findings of study 1 and 2 highlight how early in life many aspects of physical-self concept and self-objectification are established. The scarcity of developmental differences in the key concepts under examination highlights the need for interventions targeting body-related concepts and physical activity to start much earlier in life than adolescence. Indeed, the results of the current research suggests that such interventions need to take into account how young people perceive their bodies, how they use them and may need to start in age groups younger than those included in this study. Children aged between 5 and 8 years of age may be the most appropriate age group to target in order to establish healthier patterns of viewing of their own and others bodies.

The two studies reported in this thesis also revealed the importance and influence of gender on participants' experiences and uses of their bodies. In both the quantitative and qualitative data, boys reported more positive experiences and views of their bodies and physical self-concepts than did girls. In addition, boys' descriptions of their experiences of their bodies suggest a greater continuity throughout childhood

and adolescence in relation to gendered identity and physical activity than for girls. From childhood, physical activity, inside and outside of school, provides many boys with a social and recreational avenue that allows them to develop physical skills and competence and which supports and enhances the socially favoured masculine identity. Therefore, the research has several gender-specific implications for interventions targeting boys.

Firstly, for those boys who regularly engage in physical activity and who view their bodies in a predominately positive manner, interventions need to ensure that they promote identity development that minimizes other unintentional negative outcomes. For example, interventions should help boys, even at the youngest ages, recognise the importance of physical recovery and healing as well as the overall physical health and performance benefits that physical activity offers. Secondly, physical activity interventions aimed at boys who have not previously engaged in regular physical activity need to help them to find a positive place for physical activity within their gendered identity. Promoting the engagement of boys in a wider variety of physical activities, including those outside the mainstream culturally dominant sports like football are particularly needed. This requires wide-spread social reforms to provide an appropriate context that will enable this to occur. For example, schools need to more closely examine the values they inadvertently promote to young boys by critically reviewing the physical activities they exalt above others such as competitive athletics and football.

The findings for girls revealed that different interventions are required if girls are to experience and view their bodies more positively, including increasing and maintaining their participation in physical activity. Interventions promoting the ongoing participation of girls in physical activity need to take into account the

profound impact that context can have on many girls participation. For example, having female-only PE classes may not sufficiently alleviate fears about teasing or self-judgement for many girls. Creative strategies that engage friendship groups of girls rather than simply peer groups, may be successful in achieving a more sustained engagement in physical activity for girls. Broader and more wide-sweeping interventions and reforms are needed to assist girls in maintaining their preferred 'feminine' identities, while challenging the ways in which they view their bodies. Reforms need to encourage girls to recognise and value the functional and sensory aspects of their bodies and bodily experiences. Challenging dichotomous thinking may also assist girls to develop more balanced and positive overall views of their bodies. However, such changes require support from broader societal stakeholders, such as schools and the media, who often have conflicting and competing interests.

Some existing gender differences between boys and girls may be reducing but not in a positive direction, with boys increasingly reporting the importance of physical appearance to them and to the idealised bodies of others. With seemingly few interventions to alert young boys and men to the dangers associated with seeking unrealistic idealised appearances, it is not unlikely that boys will increasingly experience many of the negative effects of objectification currently experienced by girls. Fredrickson and Harrison (2005) argue that "to the extent that our culture socializes girls to self-objectify and overvalue appearance, we may also be socialising them to be both physically ineffective and physically inactive" (p.93). A recent media campaign, featuring the soccer star David Beckham in his brand-name underwear, highlights the fact that boys and men are being increasingly exposed to highly sexualized product marketing, thus being treated, at least in the media, in comparable ways to females. Therefore, boys may also be at increased risk of ineffectiveness and

inactivity, a theory supported by the national and international literature highlighting the growing problem of obesity and physical inactivity in people of most developed Western nations. Clearly, multiple diverse interventions are needed and must take into account complex gendered and contextual experiences if these trends are to be reversed. Creative interventions that borrow from other fields of psychology, such as mindfulness, or even bullying prevention, when partnered with an awareness of gendered embodiment, may have the potential to impact on the ways young people, boys and girls, experience and feel about their bodies in positive ways.

The current studies highlight the need for interventions that can accommodate the different contextual experiences of girls and boys, as well as the different gendered meaning that physical activity has for boys and girls, consistent with the earlier assertions of Kirk and Tinning (1994). Single focus strategies, such as those targeting only environmental or emotional barriers like perceived competence, or that aim to change behaviour by increasing knowledge, are unlikely to be successful and need to consider and incorporate other concurrent issues, particularly that of gendered identity.

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Background information and questions about your child's participation in physical activity

Please complete **all** the background questions.

Information about your child:

1. Roll class at school: (For example, 6a, 9W2 etc.) _____
2. Gender: (Please circle) _____ Male _____ Female
3. Date of Birth: _____
4. Age: _____

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Height (in cm's or feet and inches): _____6. Weight (in kg's or stones and pounds): _____7. In which country was your child born? <input type="checkbox"/> Australia
• Mark one box <input type="checkbox"/> Other – Please specify | <p>This information is vital to the study; please don't forget to complete it!</p>  |
|--|--|

8. Does your child speak a language other than English at home? ☐ No, only English
• Mark only one box ☐ Yes other – Please specify

9. Is your child of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin? ☐ No
• For persons of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, mark both "Yes" boxes ☐ Yes, Aboriginal ☐ Yes, Torres Strait Islander

10. What is your child's ancestry? For example, English, Irish, Hmong, Kurdish, Italian, Greek, Maori, Vietnamese.
• Provide more than one if necessary
Ancestry:

Check to make sure that you have not **missed any questions**

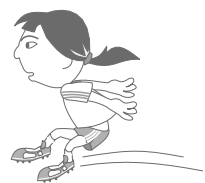
Appendix B: The APARQ Physical Activity Questionnaire

Office use: A

What physical activities does your child do?

We would like to know about the types of physical activity that your child usually does. By usual we mean physical activities they do every or most weeks, not something they have participated in a few times. Physical activity is any activity where they are moving around, like playing sport for school or a club, playing ball games or running around with friends, doing chores around the house, going for a run, or dancing to music.

The questionnaire we have given you is divided into four sections to help you remember what your child usually does. We need to explain how we would like you to answer the questions so please open the questionnaire to the first page.



****PLEASE NOTE****

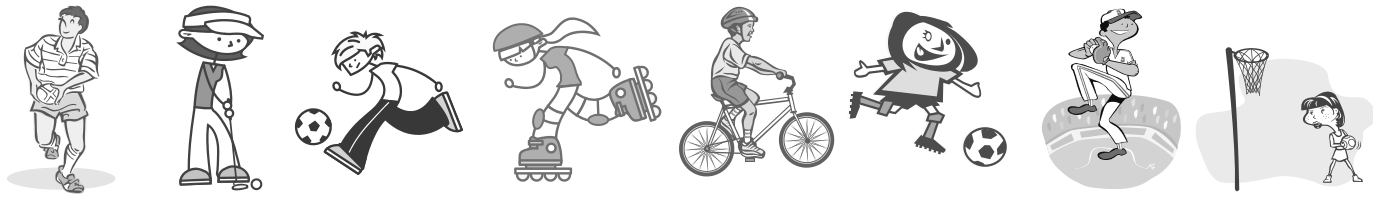
☆☆ Pages 3 – 8 provide instructions on how to complete the questions and the questions themselves

☆☆ Pages 9 - 10 provide examples of how to complete the questions (do not write anything on these pages)

It is very important that there is no right or wrong answers to these questions. It is about your child and we want you to answer them as honestly as you can.

Please complete the following questions together with your child





Instructions for Questions 1 and 2

Questions 1 and 2 ask about the types of **ORGANISED** sports, games and other physical activities your child usually does each week.

Organised activities

- Are usually supervised by an adult
- Involve training or practice
- Have organised competitions
- We do not want you to include PE lessons, holiday activities or sports camps or activities your child did only once

Some examples of organised activities are ballet, guides or scouts, rowing, swimming, soccer, rugby, little athletics, baseball, netball, cricket.



Because different sports and games are often played during different school terms, we have divided the questionnaire into **SUMMER** (Question 1) and **WINTER** (Question 2).

For question 1 we want you to think about a usual school week in **SUMMER** terms and write the following:

1. In the 1st column of the table write down what sports or games your child played for a club and for school. Put 0 if they did not do any organised sport.
2. In the 2nd column write the term in which they played these sports or games, B if they did it in both school terms.
3. In the 3rd column write the number of times each week they usually do this sport or game, including training and matches or games.
4. In the last column write the usual amount of time they spent doing this activity when they do it. You can write it in minutes or hours.

Question 2 is exactly the same, except you write down what **ORGANISED** sports and games your child does in **WINTER** school terms. Put 0 if they do not do any **WINTER** organised sports.

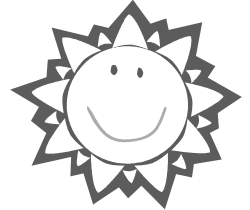
Please refer to the example on page 9

Questions 1 and 2 – Please complete

Organised sports, games and other physical activities

This question is about the organised sports and games that your child does at school, before and after school and on weekends. Please think about a normal week and write in the table below:

- The sports or games they usually do,
- Which term they do them in,
- How many times per week they usually do them (training and competition) and
- The usual amount of time they spend doing them

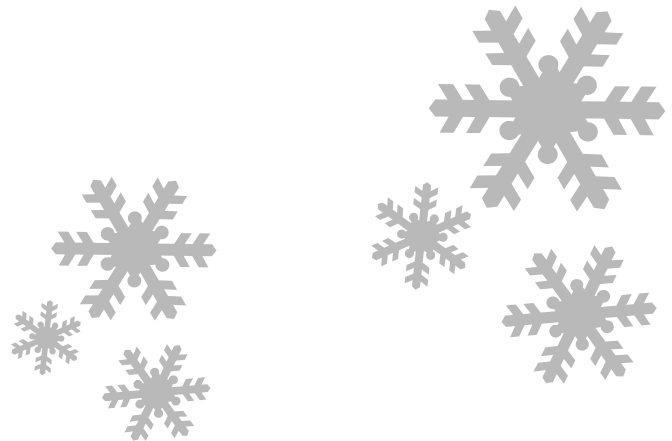


1. Summer School Terms (terms 1 & 4)

Sport or Game	Which term? 1, 4 or both?	Number of times you usually do this sport or game, including training	The usual amount of time you spend doing this sport or game EACH TIME you do it	Office use only	
For club					
For school					

2. Winter School Terms (terms 2 & 3)

Sport or Game	Which term? 2, 3 or both?	Number of times you usually do this sport or game, including training	The usual amount of time you spend doing this sport or game EACH TIME you do it	Office use only	
For club					
For school					



Instructions for Questions 3 and 4

Questions 3 & 4 are about **NON-ORGANISED** sports, games and other physical activities.



Non-organised activities

- NOT usually supervised by an adult
- NO training or practice
- NO competitions
- Do by yourself or with friends

Some examples of **NON-ORGANISED** activities are playing ball games, like soccer or basketball, bushwalking, skateboarding, walking to the shop, backyard cricket or basketball, walking or cycling to school. Please note that you can write down the same activity as an organised AND as a non-organised activity. For example, your child may play basketball twice a week for school or a club and record it in the organised section and they could have a friendly game once a week with their friends, recorded in the non-organised section.

We want you to answer these questions the same way you did for questions 1 & 2, except they are about the **NON-ORGANISED** activities your child does during **summer** and **winter** school terms.

You'll notice in the first row we want you to write how your child gets to and from school each day. Remember there are five days and if they ride a bike or walk to and from school each time then they do that 10 times a week.

In the next two rows write what physical activities they usually do at recess (play lunch) and at lunchtime. If they do not do physical activities during these breaks, write 0.

In the last section write what non-organised physical activities they usually do out of school hours.

Please refer to the example on page 10

Questions 3 and 4 – Please complete

Non-Organised sports, games and other physical activities

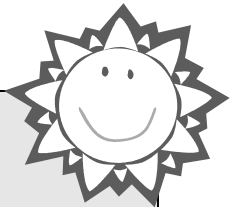
The following questions are about non-organised physical activities at school, before and after school and at weekends, such as walking or cycling to school. Think about a normal week and write in the table below:

- The activities they usually do,
- Which term they do them in,
- How many times per week they usually do them and
- The usual amount of time they spend doing the activity

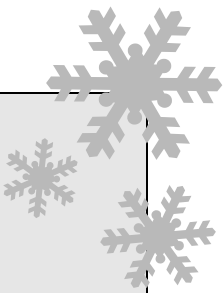
Start by filling in travel to and from school and the activities your child does at recess and lunch-time.

3. Summer School Terms (terms 1 & 4)

Physical Activity	Which term? 1, 4 or both?	Number of times you usually do this sport or game, including training	The usual amount of time you spend doing this sport or game EACH TIME you do it	Office use only
Travel to/from school				
Recess				
Lunch				
Out of School				



4. Winter School Terms (terms 2 & 3)



Physical Activity	Which term? 2, 3 or both?	Number of times you usually do this sport or game, including training	The usual amount of time you spend doing this sport or game EACH TIME you do it	Office use only	
Travel to/from school					
Recess					
Lunch					
Out of School					

Please check that you have completed all the questions!

Place them in the envelope provided (along with the signed "Consent to participate in research" form) and ask your child to return them to the secure box located in the administration block of your child's school. ✉

**Thank you for your
participation**

Examples for Question 1 and 2

For example, this person swims for a club during term 1 for 3 times a week and usually swims for 1 hour at each session. They also do Little Athletics for a club during term 4, once a week for 60 minutes. For school they do Athletics in both summer terms, 3 times a week for 30 minutes each time.

This question is about the organised sports and games that your child does at school, before and after school and on weekends. Please think about a normal week and write in the table below:

- The sports or games they usually do,
- Which term they do them in
- How many times per week they usually do them (training and competition) and
- The usual amount of time they spend doing them

1. Summer School Terms (terms 1 & 4)

Sport or Game	Which term? 1, 4 or both?	Number of times you usually do this sport or game, including training	The usual amount of time you spend doing this sport or game EACH TIME you do it	Office use only	
For club					
Swimming	1	3	60 minutes		
Little Athletics	4	1	1 hour		
For school					
Athletics	B	3	30 minutes		

Examples for Questions 3 and 4

For example, this person cycles to and from school in both terms 1 & 4 and it takes 10 minutes each way. They also play soccer during lunchtimes in term 1, once a week during lunchtime for 20 minutes, and they also have a friendly soccer game during both summer school terms once a week for 1 hour, plus they also go for a run 3 times a week which takes 20 mins each time they run. They also have to do some chores around the house, once a week, which take about 20 minutes.

The following questions are about non-organised physical activities at school, before and after school and at weekends, such as walking or cycling to school. Please think about a normal week and write in the table below:

- The activities your child usually does
- Which term they do them in
- How many times per week they usually do them (training and competition) and
- The usual amount of time they spend doing them

1. Summer School Terms (terms 1 & 4)

Physical Activity	Which term? 1, 4 or both?	Number of times you usually do this sport or game, including training	The usual amount of time you spend doing this sport or game EACH TIME you do it	Office use only	
Travel to/from school					
Cycling	B	10	10 minutes		
Recess					
Lunch					
Soccer	1	1	20 min		
Soccer	B	1	60 mins		
Running	B	3	20 mins		
Out of School					
Chores around the house	B	1	20 minutes		

Appendix C: World Health Organisation Physical Activity Questions



What physical activities does your child do?



These questions relate to *your child's* participation in physical activity or sports. Please complete these questions *together with your child* to ensure that the information you provide is as accurate as possible.

Physical activity is any activity that increases your heart rate and makes you get out of breath some of the time. Physical activity can be done in sports, school activities, playing with friends, or walking to school. Some examples of physical activity are running, brisk walking, rollerblading, biking, dancing, skateboarding, swimming, soccer, basketball, football and surfing. For these next two questions, add up all the time your child spends in physical activity each day.

- Over the past **7 days**, on how many days was your child physically active for a total of at least **60 minutes** per day? (Circle or place a X through your response)

0 days	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	6 days	7 days
--------	-------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

- Over **a typical or usual week**, on how many days is your child physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day? (Circle or place a X through your response)

0 days	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	6 days	7 days
--------	-------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

Once you have completed all the questions, please place them in the reply paid envelope provided (along with the signed "Consent to participate in research" form) and post them ✉

Thanks for your participation.

Appendix D: SATAQ Questionnaire for Girls



How People Look

Please read the following sentences and circle the answer that is most true for you.

For example, if the sentence said "Tall people look better than short people" and you thought that this was really not true. You would circle

Very true

True

Not sure

Not true

Really not

true

If you thought it was true, you would circle True.

1. Women in TV shows and movies look how I'd like to look

Very true

True

Not sure

Not true

Really not

true

2. I think that clothes look better on thin models

Very true

True

Not sure

Not true

Really not

true

3. Music videos that show thin women make me wish that I were thin

Very true

True

Not sure

Not true

Really not

true

4. I would like to look like the models in the magazines

Very true

True

Not sure

Not true

Really not

true



5. I look to see if my body looks the same or different to the people in magazines and on TV

Very true

True

Not sure

Not true

Really not

true

6. Most people think that fat people are unattractive

Very true

True

Not sure

Not true

Really not

true

7. Photos of thin women make me wish I were thin

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not true
-----------	------	----------	----------	--------------------

8. Attractiveness is very important if you want to do well in the world

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not true
-----------	------	----------	----------	--------------------

9. It's important for people to work hard on their appearance if they want to do well in the world

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not true
-----------	------	----------	----------	--------------------

10. Most people believe that the thinner you are, the better you look

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not true
-----------	------	----------	----------	--------------------

11. Most people think that the thinner you are, the better you look in clothes

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not true
-----------	------	----------	----------	--------------------

12. It is important to always look attractive

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not true
-----------	------	----------	----------	--------------------

13. I wish I looked like a swimsuit model

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not true
-----------	------	----------	----------	--------------------

14. I often read magazines like Dolly, Cosmopolitan (Cosmo), TV Hits, Vogue, Cleo, and Girlfriend and see if I look like the models

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not true
-----------	------	----------	----------	--------------------

Appendix E – SATAQ for Boys



How People look



Please read the following sentences and circle the response that is most true for you.

For example, if the sentence said “Tall people look better than short people” and you thought that this was really not true. You would circle

Very true

True

Not sure

Not true

Really not

true

If you thought it was true, you would circle True

1. Men in TV shows and movies look how I'd like to look

Very true

True

Not sure

Not true

Really not

true

2. I think that clothes look better on muscular models

Very true

True

Not sure

Not true

Really not

true

3. Music videos that show muscular men make me wish that I were more muscular

Very true

True

Not sure

Not true

Really not

true

4. I would like to look like the muscular men who model clothing

Very true

True

Not sure

Not true

Really not

true



5. I look to see if my body looks the same or different to the people in magazines and on TV

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not
				true

6. Most people think that fat people are unattractive

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not
				true

7. Photos of muscular men make me wish I were muscular

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not
				true

8. Attractiveness is very important if you want to do well in the world

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not
				true

9. It's important for people to work hard on their appearance if they want to do well in the world

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not
				true

10. Most people believe that the more muscular you are, the better you look

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not
				true

11. Most people think that the more muscular you are, the better you look in clothes

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not
				true

12. It is important to always look attractive

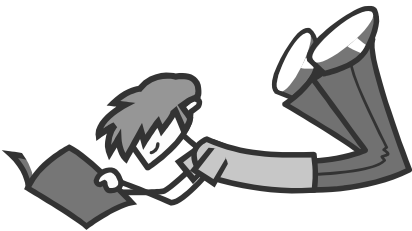
Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not
				true

13. I wish I looked like a body builder

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not true
-----------	------	----------	----------	-----------------

14. I often read magazines like Muscle and Fitness, Men’s Health, TV Hits, Sports Illustrated, and GQ and see if I look like the models

Very true	True	Not sure	Not true	Really not true
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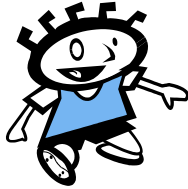


Appendix F: SOQ Questionnaire



What is most important to me about my body?

Below is a list of things about the body that might be important to some people. Please tell me which are most important to you and which are least important. It doesn't matter if, for example, being fit is very important to you but you are not actually that fit. You can still tell me that it's important.



Please read all the things on the list first, and then use the stickers to show which is the most important to the least important for you. So you would put the 1 sticker next to the one you think is the most important to you, followed by the 2 sticker next to the 2nd most important thing all the way down to 10 which is the least important thing to you.

Being physically coordinated, and making your body move how you want it to....	<input type="text"/>	Being attractive, good looking....	<input type="text"/>
Being healthy....	<input type="text"/>	Being full of energy....	<input type="text"/>
How much you weigh....	<input type="text"/>	Having firm, shaped/ sculpted muscles....	<input type="text"/>
Being strong....	<input type="text"/>	Being fit....	<input type="text"/>
Being sexy....	<input type="text"/>	How much your body measures (e.g., the size of your chest, waist, hips)....	<input type="text"/>

Appendix G: PSPP-CY Questionnaire



Instructions

First, read the two statements and pick the one that **best** describes you. When you've done that then select the response that is most right for you - really true for me or sort of true for me.

So for each item you have four choices. After you have made your choices, you will have ticked **only one box per item**. For example,

What I Am Like!



SAMPLE SENTENCE

	Really True for me	Sort of True for me			Sort of True for me	Really True for me	
a.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids would rather play out doors in their spare time	BUT	Other kids would rather watch T.V.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<hr/>							
1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids do very well at all kinds of sports	BUT	Other kids don't feel that they are very good when it comes to sports.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids don't feel that they are very physically fit	BUT	Other kids feel that they always have excellent fitness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids feel that they have a good looking (fit looking) body compared to other kids	BUT	Other kids feel that compared to most, their body doesn't look so good.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids feel that they are stronger than other kids of their age	BUT	Other kids feel that they lack strength compared to others of their age.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids are proud of themselves physically	BUT	Other kids don't have much to be proud of physically.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



	Really True for me	Sort of True for me			Sort of True for me	Really True for me
6.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids wish they could be a lot better at sports	BUT	Other kids feel that they are good enough at sports.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids try to take part in energetic physical exercise whenever they can	BUT	Other kids try to <i>avoid</i> doing energetic exercise if they can.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids think that it's <i>hard</i> to keep their bodies looking fit and in good shape	BUT	Other kids find it easy to keep their bodies looking fit and in good shape.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids think that they have stronger muscles than other kids their age	BUT	Other kids feel that they have weaker muscles than other kids their age.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids are <i>happy</i> with how they are and what they can do physically	BUT	Other kids are <i>unhappy</i> with how they are and what they can do physically.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids think they could do well at just about any new sports activity they haven't tried before	BUT	Other kids are afraid they might <i>not</i> do well at sports they haven't ever tried.	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids <i>don't</i> usually have much fitness and endurance	BUT	Other kids always have lots of fitness and endurance.	<input type="checkbox"/>
13.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids think that that their bodies <i>don't</i> look good in just shorts and T-shirt	BUT	Other kids feel that their bodies look fine in just shorts and T-shirt.	<input type="checkbox"/>



	Really True for me	Sort of True for me			Sort of True for me	Really True for me
14.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	When strong muscles are needed, some kids are the first to step forward	BUT	Other kids are the last to step forward when strong muscles are needed.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
15.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids don't feel very confident about themselves physically	BUT	Other kids really feel good about themselves physically.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
16.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids feel that they are better than others their age at sports	BUT	Other kids don't feel that they can play so well	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
17.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids feel uneasy when it comes to exercising for fitness	BUT	Other kids feel confident when it comes to doing fitness exercises.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
18.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids feel that they are often admired for their fit, good-looking bodies	BUT	Other kids feel that they are rarely admired for the way their bodies look.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
19.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids lack confidence when it comes to strength activities	BUT	Other kids are very confident when it comes to strength activities.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
20.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids have a positive feeling about themselves physically	BUT	Other kids feel somewhat negative about themselves physically.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
21.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	In games and sports some kids usually watch instead of play	BUT	Other kids usually play rather than watch.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>



	Really True for me	Sort of True for me			Sort of True for me	Really True for me
22.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids feel confident about being able to do enough exercise to stay very fit	BUT	Other kids <i>don't</i> feel confident about doing enough exercise to keep fit.	<input type="checkbox"/>
23.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids think that compared to others their bodies <i>don't</i> look in good shape physically	BUT	Other kids feel that their bodies look in great shape compared to others.	<input type="checkbox"/>
24.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids think that they are strong, and have good muscles compared to other kids their age	BUT	Other kids feel that they are weaker, and don't have such good muscles as other kids their age.	<input type="checkbox"/>
25.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids wish that they could feel better about themselves physically	BUT	Other kids <i>always</i> seem to feel good about themselves physically	<input type="checkbox"/>
26.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids <i>don't</i> do well at new outdoor games	BUT	Other kids are good at new games right away.	<input type="checkbox"/>
27.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids think that they can always do more exercise than other kids their age	BUT	Other kids feel that they <i>couldn't</i> do as much exercise as other kids their age.	<input type="checkbox"/>
28.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids are <i>happy</i> about the appearance of their bodies	BUT	Other kids wish that their bodies looked in better shape.	<input type="checkbox"/>
29.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids feel that they are <i>not</i> as good as others when physical strength is needed	BUT	Other kids feel that they are among the <i>best</i> when physical strength is needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Really True for me	Sort of True for me			Sort of True for me	Really True for me
30.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids are very <i>satisfied</i> with themselves physically	BUT	Other kids are often <i>dissatisfied</i> with themselves physically.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
31.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids are often <i>unhappy</i> with themselves	BUT	Other kids are pretty <i>pleased</i> with themselves.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
32.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids don't like the way they are leading their life	BUT	Other kids do like the way they are leading their life.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
33.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids are <i>happy</i> with themselves as a person	BUT	Other kids are often <i>not</i> happy with themselves as a person.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
34.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids <i>like</i> the kind of person they	BUT	Other kids often wish they were someone else.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
35.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids are very <i>happy</i> being the way they are	BUT	Other kids wish they were <i>different</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
36.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some kids are not very happy with the way they do a lot of things	BUT	Other kids think the way they do things is <i>fine</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix H: Information Sheet for Parents – Study 1

Victoria University

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Faculty of Human Development

Footscray Park Campus
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Footscray

21st November, 2005



INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS PARENTS/GUARDIANS

“Children’s body image study”

Your child is being invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Vanessa Spiller and Dr Harriet Speed from Victoria University. Vanessa will be conducting the research as a part of her PhD under Harriet’s supervision.

Why is the study being done?

It is well recognised that there are lots of influences that impact on how children and young people think and feel about their bodies. These influences include things like the TV and magazines, peers, school experiences, parents’ attitudes etc. These things can sometimes have a large impact on how young people feel and think about themselves and their bodies. This study is interested in finding out more about this so that we can better understand body image in children. This is the first of three studies that will look at this topic in greater depth.

Who can participate?

We are looking for children and young people aged between 8 and 18 years who are attending primary and high schools in the Hunter Region of NSW. All the parents/guardians of young people at your child’s school who fall within these ages are being asked if their child may participate in the study if they would like to.

What will be expected of me and my child?

If your child wants to participate and after discussing it with him/her you are happy for this to happen, you and your child will be asked to provide some background details about your child and the physical activities they participate in on the attached questionnaires (please complete this together with your child/ren). When these have been completed this please place them in the reply paid envelope supplied and post them.

Your child will then be invited to complete three other questionnaires that ask about different things to do with body image. This will take place at school in small groups with Vanessa during school hours. It is expected to take approximately 20 – 30 minutes. Apart from helping Vanessa organise the times of the groups, there will be no teacher involvement in order to ensure your child’s confidentiality.

What choices do I and my child have?

Only those students whose parents/carers provide written permission will be eligible to participate. Even if you provide consent for your child to participate, your child can choose not to and can withdraw from the research at any stage and does not need to give a reason. This will not affect your child's activities as a student of Hunter Christian School.

All the results of the research study will be strictly confidential. In the analysis and reporting the results, only group results will be reported and no individuals will be identifiable.

Potential risks and potential benefits

This study is not expected to pose any risks to your child and participation is voluntary. If for any reason your child/young person is unhappy as a result of taking part in the study they should contact the school counsellor.

The benefit of this study is that it will provide a greater understanding of issues relating to body image in children and young people. The information will also be useful in better designing public health messages to help children feel better about their body image.

Feedback regarding the findings of this study will be made available for you through your child's school.

What do I need to do for my child to participate?

If you agree to your child participating in this study, please complete the consent form and the attached questionnaires. This should be returned in the reply paid envelope supplied.

If you do not wish to participate, please ignore these materials.

This research has been approved by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (HRETH.042/04).

Complaints

Should you have any concerns about your rights or the rights of your child/young person as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher (Harriet Speed – phone (03) 5984 4713; email Harriet.Speed@vu.edu.au or Vanessa Spiller; phone: 4924 6043; email: Vanessa.Spiller@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au), or if you prefer to talk to an independent person you can contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (Tel: 03 9688 4710).

Further information

If you have any questions about the research or about your participation, please contact Vanessa Spiller on 4924 6043.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Appendix I: Information Sheet for Children – Study 1

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Faculty of Human Development

Footscray Park Campus
Ballarat Road
Footscray

INFORMATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
"Children's body image study"



This study is interested in how children and adolescents think and feel about their bodies. Your parents/carers have given their permission for me to ask you to be in this study.

If you choose to take part in this study you will be asked to fill out several questionnaires. This will take place at your school and will take about 30 minutes. You will do this in small groups with other young people who are around the same age.

The questionnaires will ask you to answer some questions about what you think and feel about your body and the different ways that you use it (for example, during sports). There are no right or wrong answers to the questions and this is not a test. I am only interested in what you think is true for you.

The answers that you give will be kept private and they will not be shown to other people in your school. Only my supervisors at the university and I will be looking at your answers.

You can choose whether or not you want to be a part of this study (even if your parent/carers said that you could). You do not have to tell me why you don't want to take part and will not be in trouble with me or anyone at the school if you decide not to. If there is something about the study that makes you upset, you can talk to me after the study or at the next recess. You can also talk to your school counselor and they do not have anything to do with this study.

Please ask me any other questions that you may have about the study.

Should you have any concerns about your rights or about participating in this research, or if you have a complaint the research you can give it to the researcher, Harriet Speed (Tel: (03) 9688 4287; email Harriet.Speed@vu.edu.au or Vanessa Spiller (Tel: 4924 6294; Email: Vanessa.Spiller@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au), or if you prefer to talk to someone who is not involved in the study, you can talk to the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (Tel: 03 9688 4710).

If you feel uncomfortable or upset following the study, please contact your school counsellor.

Appendix J: Consent Form for Parents – Study 1

Victoria University

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Telephone:
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Faculty of Human Development

Footscray Park Campus
Ballarat Road
Footscray

19th September, 2005

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

I confirm that I have discussed with my child _____ the study "Children's body image study" which is being conducted by Vanessa Spiller and Dr Harriet Speed from Victoria University and give my permission for them to take part in this study if they choose to.

I have had the purpose of the study and the research procedures fully explained to me in the information sheet provided. I have had an opportunity to ask Vanessa Spiller and Dr Speed any questions that I had.

I give permission for my child to answer the questionnaires described and understand that any information provided by myself and my child will be kept strictly confidential.

I also understand that having provided my consent, the study will be explained to my child and that they will also be given the chance to ask questions. They will also be asked to give their permission to participate in the study. Their participation is entirely voluntary and they may withdraw from the study at any time without any effect on them as a student of Newcastle Grammar School.

Parents Name _____ Signature _____

Date _____

Should you have any concerns about your rights or the rights of your child/young person as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, Harriet Speed (Tel: (03) 9688 4287; email Harriet.Speed@vu.edu.au) or Vanessa Spiller (Tel: 4924 6043; Email: Vanessa.Spiller@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au), or if you prefer to talk to an independent person you can contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (Tel: 03 9688 4710).

If your child/young person feels uncomfortable or upset following the session you should contact the school counsellor.

Appendix K: Assent Form for Children – Study 1

Victoria University

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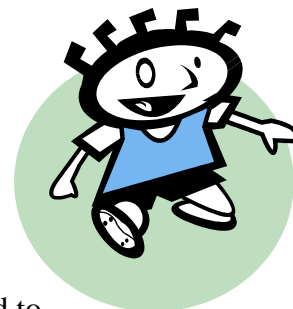


Faculty of Human Development

Footscray Park Campus
Ballarat Road
Footscray

ASSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE

I confirm that I have volunteered to take part in the research - "Children's Body Image study" that is being conducted by Vanessa Spiller and Dr Harriet Speed of Victoria University.



The aim of the study and what I will be asked to do has been fully explained to me by the researcher and I have had an opportunity to ask questions.

I agree to complete the questionnaires provided and I understand that all my answers and results will be kept strictly private/confidential.

I understand that my participation is up to me and I can choose to leave at anytime. This won't have any effect on me as a student of Hunter Christian School.

Name _____ Signature _____

Date _____

Should you have any concerns about your rights or about participating in this research, or if you have a complaint the research you can give it to the researcher, Harriet Speed (Tel: (03) 9688 4287; email Harriet.Speed@vu.edu.au or Vanessa Spiller (Tel: 4924 6294; Email: Vanessa.Spiller@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au), or if you prefer to talk to someone who is not involved in the study, you can talk to the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (Tel: 03 9688 4710).

If you feel uncomfortable or upset following the study, please contact your school counsellor.

APPENDIX L: Interview Schedule for Study 2

Interview Schedule

"I would like you to draw me a picture or a couple of pictures that tell me about the thing or things that are important to you about your body".

"This could be anything at all that is important to you about your body. It might be something about how your body looks, and/or what you can do with it and/or how it feels or it might be something else different altogether. It is entirely up to you what you draw".

"When you have finished I will ask you to tell me about the drawing/s you have done and I will ask you some other questions about your drawing/s and the things you tell me".

"It doesn't matter if you are a good drawer or not, and you can draw using any style or type of pictures that you like. Just draw a picture that makes sense to you. You can take as long as you like".

"Do you have any questions?"

STAGE 1:

Direct them to start drawing and to let me know when they are finished.

a. "Tell me about the picture that you have drawn..."

Probing, clarifying and expanding questions as required:

- "Tell me more about [this part] of your drawing..."
- "What do you mean by...."
- "What is important about [this part] of your drawing?"
- "What do you do with [this part of your body?]"
- "Who have you've included in your picture?"
- "What are you doing in this part of the picture?"
- b. "Are there other things that are important to you about your body that you haven't drawn?"
 - "Tell me about those other things..."
 - "What is important about [thing/s]?"
 - "How important to you are they?"

STAGE 2:

Additional questions reflecting the broader literature

- "Other people have said some other things are sometimes important to them about their bodies, I'm wondering if these things are ever important to you?"
- "What about how your body looks?"
- "What about how your body feels (for example, if it feels healthy or if it feels strong or fast etc.)?"

- “What about how you use your body or what you can do with it (for example, is it important that you can use your body to run fast or jump high or to be strong or to play certain games or sports etc.)?”

STAGE 3:

Questions reflecting contextual differences

- “Is [the things that you have drawn in your picture] or that you’ve told me about, important all the time or does it change sometimes, for example, depending on:
 - “Where you are?”
 - “What you are doing?”
 - “Who you are with?”
 - “What would be some examples?”

STAGE 4:

Questions reflecting contextual differences on importance and reflecting the broader literature

Some people say that different things about their bodies are important at different times, for example, depending on whether they are playing with boys or playing with girls. Some people don’t think it makes any difference. What about for you:

- “Are the same things important about your body when you are at home as at school? Anything that would be different?”
 - “Tell me more about this”
 - “What would be some examples?”
- “What about when you are playing sport or doing some physical activity? Are the same things important to you about your body when you playing sport or doing some physical activity? Anything that would be different?”
 - “Tell me more about this”
 - “What would be some examples?”
- “What about when you are with your friends? Are the same things important to you about your body when you are with your friends? Anything that would be different?”
 - “Tell me more about this”
 - “What would be some examples?”
- “What about when you are with other boys – (used when interviewing a boy), OR other girls (when interviewing a girl)? Are the same things important to you about your body when you are playing with other boys or girls (depending on gender being interviewed)? Anything that would be different?”
 - “Tell me more about this”
 - “What would be some examples?”
- “What about when you are with [members of the opposite sex] – language to be used with children: with girls (for boys being interviewed) and boys (for when girls are being interviewed)]? Are the same things important to you about your body when you playing with boys (for girls being interviewed / or girls (for when boys are being interviewed) [opposite gender]? Anything that would be different?”
 - “Tell me more about this”
 - “What would be some examples?”

- “What about when you are with a boyfriend/girlfriend or potential boyfriend/girlfriend? Are the same things important to you about your body when you are with a boyfriend/girlfriend or potential boyfriend/girlfriend? Anything that would be different?”
 - “Tell me more about this”
 - “What would be some examples?”
- “What about when you are with your family? Are the same things important to you about your body when you are just with your family? Anything that would be different?”
 - “Tell me more about this”
 - “What would be some examples?”
- “What about when you are alone? Are the same things important to you about your body when you are all alone, just by yourself? Anything that would be different?”
 - “Tell me more about this”
 - “What would be some examples?”

STAGE 5:

Questions about how they feel about their body

- What would be some words to describe how you feel about your body?
- What makes X important?
- Do your feelings about your body always stay the same or do they sometimes change?
- Tell me about what happens when they change (Where, when, what, with who questions)
- “What would be some examples?”

STAGE 6:

Questions about personal ideals and body change strategies

- If you could change something or some things about your body what would you change?
- How do you think things would change for you if you changed X?

Questions about ideal bodies

- If you could imagine the best girl body for someone your age to have what would it be like? How would you describe it?
 - Probe if necessary: What would it look like? What could that person do with it? How would it make them feel?
- If you could imagine the best boy body for someone your age to have, what would it be like? How would you describe it?
 - Probe if necessary: What would it look like? What could that person do with it? How would it make them feel?

STAGE 8:

Conclusion/finishing up

- “Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?”
- “Do you have any questions about the study or what we have done today?”

Appendix M: Information Sheet for Parents - Study 2

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Faculty of Human Development

Footscray Park Campus
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Footscray

18th July, 2007; Version 1

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS PARENTS/GUARDIANS

“Children’s body image study”

Your child is being invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Vanessa Spiller and Dr’s Caroline Symons and Harriet Speed from Victoria University. Vanessa will be conducting the research as a part of her doctoral research degree at Victoria University.

Why is the study being done?

It is well recognised that there are many influences that impact on how children and young people think and feel about their bodies. These influences include things like the TV and magazines, peers, school experiences, parents’ attitudes etc. These things can sometimes have a large impact on how young people feel and think about themselves and their bodies. This study is interested in finding out more about this so that we can better understand body image in children.

Who can participate?

We are looking for children and young people aged between 8 and 18 years. Parents/guardians of young people who fall within these ages are being asked if their child may participate in the study and if they would like to.

What will be expected of me and my child?

If your child wants to participate and after discussing it with him/her you are happy for this to happen, you and your child will be asked to provide some background details about your child and the physical activities they participate in on the attached questionnaires (please complete this together with your child/ren). A suitable time and venue to meet with your child and yourself will be organised over the phone.

On meeting with you, your child will then be invited to participate individually in an interview with the researcher; including completing a drawing related the topic of body image. Following the drawing, they will be asked a series of questions about their drawing and about the things of importance to them about their bodies in different situations, for example, when they are playing sport. The interview will be audio taped.

This interview is expected to take approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

What choices do I and my child have?

Only those children/adolescents whose parents/guardians provide written permission will be eligible to participate. Even if you provide consent for your child to participate, your child can choose not to and can withdraw from the research at any stage and does not need to give a reason.

All the results of the research study will be strictly confidential, excepting where children/young people reveal information that is contrary to their safety. In the analysis and reporting the results, identifying materials will be removed. You will also be asked to provide consent to include your child's drawing in the final report with all identifying information removed.

Potential risks and potential benefits

This study is not expected to pose any risks to your child and participation is voluntary. If for any reason your child/young person is unhappy or distressed as a result of taking part in the study you and/or your child are invited to contact a Community Health Counsellor (Ph: 024925 7800), who is aware of, but not part of, the study. This counselling service is free of any charge.

The benefit of this study is that it will provide a greater understanding of issues relating to body image in children and young people. The information will also be useful in better designing public health messages to help children feel better about their body image.

Feedback regarding the findings of this study will be made available for you.

What do I need to do for my child to participate?

If you agree to your child participating in this study, please complete the consent form and the attached questionnaires.

If you do not wish to participate, please ignore and discard these materials.

This research has been approved by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (HRETH).

Complaints

Should you have any concerns about your rights or the rights of your child/young person as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher (Caroline Symons – phone (03) 9919 5412; email Caroline.Symons@vu.edu.au or Vanessa Spiller; phone: 0439 662114; email: spillerv@allhallows.qld.edu.au), or if you prefer to talk to an independent person you can contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (Tel: 03 9919 4710).

Further information

If you have any questions about the research or about your participation, please contact Vanessa Spiller on (02) 4924 6043.

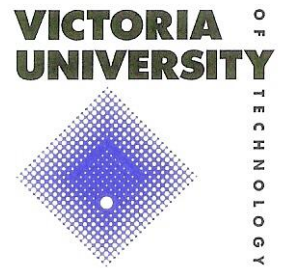
Thank you for considering this invitation.

Appendix N: Information Sheet for Children - Study 2

Victoria University

PO Box 14428
Melbourne VIC 8001
Australia

Telephone:
(03) 9919 4456
Facsimile:
(03) 9919 4803



Faculty of Human Development

Footscray Park Campus
Ballarat Road
Footscray

18th July, 2007; Version 1



INFORMATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

“Children’s body image study”

This study is interested in how children and adolescents think and feel about their bodies. Your parents/carers have given their permission for me to ask you to be in this study.

If you choose to take part in this study you will be asked to complete a drawing and will then be asked some questions about what you’ve drawn and about the different ways that you use body, for example, during sports. This will happen at a place that is private and near to you and your family. The whole interview will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

In the interview you will be asked to explain what you have drawn and will be asked some questions about what you think and feel about your body and the different ways that you use it. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions and this is not a test. I am only interested in what you think is true for you. The interview will be audio taped.

The answers that you give and the things we talk about will be kept private and they will not be shown to other people except if you tell me that you are unsafe. Your interview is private and that means that I will not be telling your parents or other family members what you have said or drawn unless you ask me to. I will also use the drawings that you make in my final report, but only when any information about you has been removed. Only my supervisors at the university and I will be looking at your answers.

You can choose whether or not you want to be a part of this study (even if your parent/carers said that you could). You do not have to tell me why you don’t want to take part and will not be in trouble with me or anyone else if you decide not to. If there is something about the study that makes you upset, you can talk to me after the study. You can also talk to a Community Health Counsellor (4925 7800) and they do not have anything to do with this study.

Please ask me any other questions that you may have about the study.

If you feel uncomfortable or upset following the study, please contact a Community Health Counsellor (Ph: (02) 4925 7800).

Appendix O: Consent Form for Parents – Study 2

Victoria University

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Melbourne VIC 8001
Australia

Telephone:
(03) 9919 4456
Facsimile:
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Faculty of Human Development

Footscray Park Campus
Ballarat Road
Footscray

18th July, 2007; Version 1

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

I confirm that I have discussed with my child _____ the study "Children's body image study" which is being conducted by Vanessa Spiller and Dr Caroline Symons from Victoria University and give my permission for them to take part in this study if they choose to.

I have had the purpose of the study and the research procedures fully explained to me in the information sheet provided. I have had an opportunity to ask Vanessa Spiller any questions that I had.

I give permission for my child to participate in an interview in which they will be asked to provide a drawing and then asked a series of questions. I understand that it will be audio taped for later analysis. I understand that any information provided by myself and my child will be kept strictly confidential.

I also give permission for the drawing/s made by my child to be included in the final report, with all identifying information removed.

I also understand that having provided my consent, the study will be explained to my child and that they will also be given the chance to ask questions. They will also be asked to give their permission to participate in the study. Their participation is entirely voluntary and they may withdraw from the study at any time without any effect on them.

Parents Name _____ Signature _____

Date _____

Should you have any concerns about your rights or the rights of your child/young person as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher (Caroline Symons – phone (03) 9919 5412; email Caroline.Symons@vu.edu.au or Vanessa Spiller; phone: 0439 662114; email: spillerv@allhallows.qld.edu.au), or if you prefer to talk to an independent person you can contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (Tel: 03 9919 4710).

If your child/young person feels uncomfortable or upset following the session you should contact a Community Health Counsellor (4925 7800).

Appendix P: Assent Form for Children – Study 2

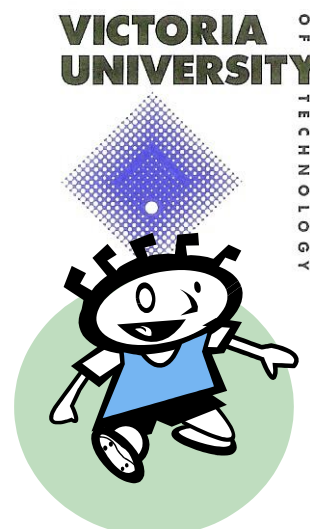
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18TH JULY, 2007; VERSION 1

ASSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE

I agree to take part in the research - "Children's Body Image study" that is being done by Vanessa Spiller of Victoria University.

What the study is about and what I will be asked to do has been explained to me by the researcher and I have had an opportunity to ask any questions I have.

I agree to do a drawing and then answer some questions for the researcher and I understand that all my answers and results will be kept strictly private/confidential. I understand that the interview will be taped.

I agree to let the researcher use my drawing/s in her report but only when all my personal information has been removed.

I understand that my participation is up to me and I can choose to leave at anytime.

Name _____ Signature _____

Date _____

If you feel uncomfortable or upset following the study, please contact a Community Health counsellor (4925 7800).
