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Physical or Visual: How do Girls Experience their Bodies during Sports and Non-Sport Activities?

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Why body image?
  - What is it? Why is it important to adolescents?

Sports and body image

Body experiences in sport
  - The current study
    - Gender differences
    - Contextual differences
    - Sport type differences
    - Relation to body image and sport enjoyment

Conclusions
Body Image and Adolescents

Why is this an important topic to discuss?

- Body dissatisfaction increases during middle adolescence (Bucchianeri et al., 2013)

- Body image is one of the top 3 greatest concerns held by young people in Australia (Mission Australia, 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014).

- Females consistently report greater body dissatisfaction than their male peers (Barker & Galambos, 2003; Cash, Fleming, Alindogan, Steadman & Whitehead, 2002; Gadbois & Bowker, 2007).

- This gender distinction begins as early as 8 years old.
Promoting Positive Body Image: Balancing function and form

Function
“What I can DO”

Aesthetics
“How I LOOK”
Body Image & Sport

- **Body perceptions impact girls sports participation** (Dovey, Reeder & Chalmers, 1998; Dwyer et al., 2006; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010)

- **Sports participants report a more functional orientated body image** (Abbott & Barber, 2011)

- A focus on body function has been associated with positive body evaluations, greater body appreciation and intuitive eating (Abbott & Barber, 2010; Avalos & Tylka, 2006; Franzoi, 1995; Frisén & Holmqvist 2010; Greenleaf, Boyer & Petrie, 2009).

- **Sport types can impact body image differently** (Parson & Betz, 2001; Smolak, Murnen & Ruble, 2000; Swami, Steadman & Tovée, 2009; Tiggemann & Slater, 2001; Varnes et al., 2013)
Experiential Learning & the Body

Why might sports influence body image?

- Sports offer girls the opportunity to experience the body as an instrumental entity.

- Physical activity and sports offer girls an opportunity to experience freedom of movement and invest in the instrumental qualities and potential of their bodies. (Kitchen, 2006)

- But this is rarely measured quantitatively in adolescents.
The Current Study

**Aim:** To explore the experiences girls have with their bodies during sports and how these experiences impact on body image and sport enjoyment.

- Experiences of physical competence
- Experiences of body objectification
- Sport and non-sport contexts
- Sport types; aesthetic and non-aesthetic
Participants & Method

Participants:
- Youth Activity Participation Study of Western Australia (YAPS-WA), wave 2
- 1837 Adolescents aged 13-18 years ($M= 14.6$, $SD= 1.01$; 55% female)
- 34 high schools
  - Metropolitan, rural and remote areas

Method
- Self-report survey
- Administered via laptop
- Extracurricular Activity (ECA) participation
  - sports, non-sports
- Experiences of the body, body image, and sport enjoyment
Measures: Body Experiences & Sport Enjoyment

- **Experiences of Body Objectification (3 items, $\alpha = .69 - .81$):**
  - Where the body is experienced as a visual object
  - Modelled on the Youth Experience Survey (YES) 2.0
  - 4-point scale (1= not at all, 4= yes, definitely)
  - e.g. “People have said things about how my body looks”

- **Experiences of Physical Competence (3 items, $\alpha = .72 - .87$):**
  - Where the body is experienced as functional or physically skilled/competent
  - e.g. “I have improved my physical skills”

- **Sport Enjoyment (1 item):**
  - 7-point likert scale; 1 = a little, 7 = a lot
  - “How much do you enjoy participating in this sporting activity?”
Measures: Body Image

Embodied Image Scale  (EIS; Abbott & Barber 2010)

- **Functional Body Image**
  - 2 subscales (5-point likert scale 1 = not at all true for me, 5 = very true for me)
    - Functional values (3 items; $\alpha = .70$)
    - Functional satisfaction (3 items; $\alpha = .89$)

- **Aesthetic Body Image**
  - 2 subscales
    - Aesthetic values (3 items; $\alpha = .80$)
    - Aesthetic satisfaction (3 items; $\alpha = .91$)
Measures: Sport Types

- **Aesthetic sports** – success may be partly dependent on the form of the body, or how good it looks. Not based on skill alone.
  - For example:
    - gymnastics; dance; cheerleading

- **Non-aesthetic sports** – success is not dependent on the form of the body, but on competence and skill, or how well it performs.
  - For example:
    - basketball, netball, soccer
An analyses

- **Experiences of physical competence vs. Body Objectification**
  - Which experiences are more prevalent during ECA’s?

- **Girls’ Body experiences by context**
  - Do experiences differ by context?
  - Between person (sport only vs. non-sport only; aesthetic vs. non-aesthetic)
  - Within person (dance vs. non-aesthetic sports)

- **Girls’ Body experiences, body image and sport enjoyment**
  - Do experiences predict body image and sport enjoyment?
Results: Body Experiences

![Bar chart showing comparison of Exp of Phys Comp and Exp of Body Obj]

- Exp of Phys Comp: 3.17*
- Exp of Body Obj: 2.07

*N = 518; *t (517) = 55.54, p < .001
Results: Body Experiences by Context

Between-Person: Sports vs. Non-Sports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sport Only</th>
<th>Non-Sport Only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exp of Phys Comp</td>
<td>3.4*</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp of Body Obj</td>
<td>2.2*</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 384  
BMI controlled; * Mean significantly higher at p < .001 alpha level
Results: Body Experiences by Context

Between-Person: Aesthetic vs. Non-Aesthetic Sports

- **Exp of Phys Comp**
  - Aesthetic Sports: 3.6
  - Non-Aesthetic Sports: 3.5

- **Exp of Body Obj**
  - Aesthetic Sports: 2.5*
  - Non-Aesthetic Sports: 2.1

*N = 672  
BMI controlled; * Mean significantly higher at p < .001 alpha level
Within-Person Results:

Dance vs Non-Aesthetic Sports

- Exp of Phys Comp: Dance (3.2) vs Non-Aesthetic Sport (3.4*)
- Exp of Body Obj: Dance (2.2) vs Non-Aesthetic Sport (2.1)

N = 72  BMI controlled, * Mean significantly higher at p < .05 alpha level
# Body Experiences and Aesthetic Body Image

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aesthetic Values</th>
<th></th>
<th>Aesthetic Satisfaction</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( N = 684 )</td>
<td>( N = 685 )</td>
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<td>( SE B )</td>
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<td>( B )</td>
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<td><strong>Model 1</strong></td>
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<td>BMI</td>
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<td><strong>Model 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant BMI</td>
<td>1.95</td>
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<td>0.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sport Exp of Phys Comp</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
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<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sport Exp of Body Obj</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.54*</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aesthetic Values \( R^2 \) for Step 1 = 0.004, \( \Delta R^2 \) for model 2 = 0.28, Aesthetic Satisfaction = \( R^2 \) for Step 1 = 0.05, \( \Delta R^2 \) for model 2 = 0.06; **\( F \) change sig at .001 alpha level
## Body Experiences and Functional Body Image

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>$B$</td>
<td>$SE B$</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant BMI</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.18**</td>
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</table>
| Functional Values $R^2$ for Step 1 = 0.004, $\Delta R^2$ for model 2 = 0.14; Functional Satisfaction $= R^2$ for Step 1 = 0.03, $\Delta R^2$ for model 2 = 0.17; $F$ change sig at * .05, **.001 alpha level
## Body Experiences and Sport Enjoyment

### Table: Sport Enjoyment

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Constant BMI</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
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<td></td>
<td>6.85</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-0.09*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Sport Exp of Phys Comp</td>
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<td>Sport Exp of Body Obj</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>0.42</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport Exp of Phys Comp</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.13**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport Exp of Body Obj</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.34***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$R^2$ for Step 1 = 0.008, $\Delta R^2$ for model 2 = 0.12; $F$ change sig at * .05, **.01, ***.001 alpha level
What does it all mean?

- In both types of leisure pursuits, girls experienced the physical competence of their bodies more often than they reported feeling aesthetically objectified.
  - But objectification was not absent.

- Body experiences differ across sport types and by analyses

- Body experiences during sport were significantly related to girls’ body image and their sport enjoyment
Why more objectifying experiences in sports?
Advice

• Coaches –
  o Mindfulness about function and form balance
  o Provide opportunities for girls to experience physical competence
  o Acknowledgment of uniform differences – are they necessary
  o Be careful of compliments/criticisms around appearance

• Parents –
  o Advocate sports participation
  o Focus on physical competence
  o Sport selection
  o Mindfulness of commentary

• Wider society –
  o Sport commentary/media
  o Uniform design
“My coach told me I ran like a girl....”
I said if he ran a little faster, he could too”

Mia Hamm
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**YAPS-WA Wave 2 Team**
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- Joshua Brain
- Karina Annear